

# RESOUNDING THE GOOD NEWS

Catechetical Curriculum Guidelines  
Archdiocese of Baltimore

## INTRODUCTION

Christian catechesis is the memory of the church about the story of mankind- created in love by God and called to life with him; fallen and lost through sin; redeemed, made whole and saved by Christ (creation-sin-redemption).

Catechesis is rooted in the earliest experience of the church.

Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

Matthew 28: 19-20

The two elements of “baptizing” – all that is done through initiation – and “teaching” are essential processes in “making disciples” of Jesus. Our Holy Father, Pope John Paul II described this fundamental role of catechesis: “Very soon the name of catechesis was given to the whole of the efforts within the Church to make disciples, to help people to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, so that believing they might have life in his name, and to educate and instruct them in this life and thus build up the Body of Christ” (*CT*, #1).

Catechesis is an integral and essential activity for carrying out the mission of the Church. The universal law of the Church states this responsibility clearly:

There is a proper and serious duty, especially on the part of pastors of souls, to provide for the catechesis of the Christian people so that the faith of the faithful becomes living, explicit and productive through formation in doctrine and the experience of Christian living. (*CIC*, #773)

The content of catechesis is Scripture, Tradition, and the Magisterium.

Development of the message: The word of God is contained in Tradition and Scripture; it is developed by the instinct for the faith of the people (*sensus fidelium*) guided by the Magisterium which has the duty of “giving an authentic interpretation of the word of God” (*DV11*); it is celebrated and expressed in the liturgy; shines forth in the witness of the saints; deepened by the theological research; and made manifest in the moral life of Christian society (*GDC #95*)

**The Gospel is the Word of the Church:** The message of Christian catechesis is an ecclesial one handed on by all the Church; thus the catechetical act is ecclesial, not private. It is an act of the whole Church;

the apostles who received it as the eyewitnesses of Christ and the Christ event; the martyrs who give it witness by their blood; the saints who live it profoundly; the Fathers and doctors of the Church who teach it and make it clear; the missionaries who proclaim it anew in every land; and the bishops who conserve it and give it doctrinal force by authentically interpreting it. It is this ecclesial teaching which is lived out daily by the faithful and taught by the catechist (cf GDC #105).

Catechesis is an integral and essential activity for carrying out the mission of the Church; and it is the responsibility of the entire Christian community (GDC #220). The bishop has primary responsibility for catechesis in the local Church. Bishops are “heralds of the faith” and it’s “authentic teachers” (LG #25). Through episcopal ordination they have received the “charism of truth” (DV #8) and are therefore “beyond all others the ones primarily responsible for catechesis and catechists par excellence” (CT #63). The universal law of the Church states this responsibility clearly:

There is a proper and serious duty, especially on the part of pastors of souls, to provide for the catechesis of the Christian people so that the faith of the faithful becomes living, explicit and productive through formation in doctrine and the experience of Christian living. (CIC, #773)

The priest is also intimately involved in the catechesis of the local Church. “In catechesis the sacrament of Holy Orders constitutes priests as ‘educators of the faith’ (PO #6). They work, therefore, to see that the faithful are properly formed and reach true Christian maturity. {...and } foster the vocation of catechists and assist them” (GDC #224).

## **FOCUS ON JESUS**

The three inter-locking means, formation and doctrine and the experience of Christian living, strive to achieve the goal of a living, explicit and productive **FAITH**. This faith is faith in Jesus Christ.

At the heart of catechesis we find, in essence, a Person, the Person of Jesus of Nazareth, the only Son from the Father....To catechize is to reveal in the Person of Christ, the whole of God’s design reaching fulfillment in that Person....Catechesis aims at putting people... in communion with Jesus Christ. (CCC, #426)

He is the center of catechesis because revelation and the Father’s plan for our salvation culminate in him. It is through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus that sin and death are conquered, that the Father’s saving love is revealed, and that the Spirit is sent to lead the Church to the Kingdom.

Parents of children receive in Matrimony the grace and ministry of the Christian education of their children (ChL #62). "Family catechesis precedes . . . accompanies and enriches all forms of catechesis" (CT #68). Religious and those in consecrated life give public witness to the Kingdom by their very way of life and many have also the charism of Christian education; their "original and particular contribution can never be substituted for by priests or by laity" (GDC #228). Finally, lay catechists find the source of their vocation in Baptism and Confirmation. They answer the call to bring the Gospel into the secular culture that it might be transformed by the grace of Christ. "In addition to the common vocation of the apostolate, some lay people feel called interiorly by God to assume the service of catechist [...] There should be in a diocese a certain number of religious and laity publicly recognized and permanently dedicated to catechesis who, in communion with the priests and the Bishop, give to this diocesan service that ecclesial form which is proper to it" (GDC #231).

***Integrity of the Gospel message.*** The message must be maintained in its "integrity and purity" (GDC #111). Christ has made known to us all that he has heard from the Father (Jn 15:15), and the apostles have handed on to the Church all that they received from Christ (1 Cor 15:3). Catechesis must present the whole Gospel of Christ without distortion or partial presentation. "[The] person who becomes a disciple of Christ has the right to receive the words of faith, not in mutilated, falsified, or diminished form but whole and entire, in all its rigor and vigor" (CT #30). Catechesis must be true to the Word of God, neither "reducing demands for fear of rejection [nor] imposing heavy burdens which it does not impose" (GDC #112).

***The Gospel is a hierarchical message.*** The full integrity of the Gospel distinguishes the so-called "hierarchy of truths". The hierarchy of truths "does not mean that some truths pertain to faith itself less than others, but that some truths are based on others as of a higher priority and are illumined by them" (GCD #43). The GDC specifies this hierarchy as follows:

- (1) the story of salvation with Christ and the Christ event at the center: the Father's creation, the Old Testament preparation for the coming of Christ, Christ as the fullness of revelation, the Spirit and the mission of the Church, eschatology and the final things
- (2) the Apostles' Creed: synthesis of and key to all the Church's doctrine
- (3) the sacraments centered around the Eucharist: the life-giving forces which spring from the Paschal Mystery
- (4) the moral message centered on the Great Commandment of love of God and love of neighbor and lived out in the Beatitudes: the expression of the hierarchy of values
- (5) the Lord's Prayer: the prayer which teaches a child-like trust in God

***The Gospel is Christocentric.*** The person of Jesus Christ is at the heart of the Christian catechesis. He is the fullness of revelation, the Word of God himself. Thus he is the message: he is the center of the work of salvation history; he is the end toward

which all things converge. “Christocentricity obliges catechesis to transmit what Jesus teaches about God, man, happiness, the moral life, death, etc. without in any way changing his thought” (EN #15).

***The Gospel message is the message of salvation and the Kingdom.*** Jesus preached the Good News of the coming of the Kingdom. This is a message of liberation “from all those things by which man is possessed, but especially liberation from sin and from the domination of the evil one, a liberation which incorporates that gladness enjoyed by every man who knows God and is known by him, who sees God and who surrenders himself trustingly to him” (EN #9). Salvation in Christ and liberation for the Kingdom imply God’s special love for mankind created in his image, his victory over sin and death, the fraternity and communion of mankind with God and itself, and our earthly responsibilities with regard to the human role in the making of the Kingdom- the work of peace, justice and love for the poor in spirit. The message of liberation is integral, but primarily implies spiritual liberation from sin and death; it cannot be reduced to any “restricted sphere whether it be economic, political, social or doctrinal” (GDC #103).

“Two distinct but complementary instruments at the service of the Church’s catechetical activity” (GDC #120) are *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994) and the *General Directory for Catechesis* (1997).

#### **The GDC:**

- (1) “provides the basic principles of pastoral theology taken from the Magisterium of the Church, and in a special way from the Second Vatican Council by which pastoral action in the ministry of the Word can be more fittingly directed and governed” (GDC #120). The GDC is “an official aid for the transmission of the Gospel message and for the whole of catechetical activity” (GDC #120).
- (2) Is a guide for our local guidelines (GDC #10-11):
  - (1) The GDC’s statements on Revelation, nature of catechesis
  - (2) and criteria for proclaiming the Gospel are universally valid  
The GDC’s statements on methodology and adaptation to cultural contexts are indicators and guidelines

The **CCC** holds a central place in catechesis:

- (1) The CCC is “a point of reference for the authentic presentation of the content of the faith” (GDC #120). It is “an act of the Magisterium of the Pope, by which, in our times, in virtue of Apostolic Authority, he synthesizes normatively the totality of the Catholic faith” (GDC #120).
- (2) The CCC is a “sure norm for teaching the faith” (GDC #128) and “aims at presenting an organic synthesis of the essential and fundamental contents of Catholic doctrine, as regards both faith and morals, in light of the

Second Vatican Council and the whole of the Church's Tradition" (GDC #121).

- (3) "it is thus an obligatory point of reference for catechesis" [...and...] "a sure and authentic reference text for teaching Catholic doctrine and particularly for preparing local catechisms" (GDC #121).
- (4) it "collects all that is fundamental and common to the Christian life without 'presenting as doctrines of the faith special interpretations which are only private opinions or the views of some theological schools'" (GDC #124).

Catechesis helps people, adults, adolescents and children, to come to know Jesus and to develop a personal relationship, a friendship, with Jesus. "You are my friends if you do what I command you" (John 15:12). Nurturing this relationship with Jesus is a life-long responsibility—no one ever "graduates" from the need to nourish and deepen one's relationship with Jesus.

It must be restated that nobody in the Church of Jesus Christ should feel excused from receiving catechesis. This is true even of young seminarians and young religious, and of all those called to the task of being pastors and catechists. They will fulfill this task all the better if they are humble pupils of the Church, the great giver as well as the great receiver of Catechesis. (Pope John Paul II, *CT*, #45)

## AIMS OF CATECHESIS

In striving to achieve the goal of making disciples of Jesus, catechesis includes six specific tasks. All catechetical programs seek to:

- (1) **to proclaim the Christian message and promote knowledge of the faith.** Love of Christ cannot be separated from knowledge of Christ. Thus, catechesis must introduce the disciple to the knowledge of Scripture and Tradition so that he may nourish the life of faith and be able to explain his faith to the world.
- (2) **prepare for prayer and worship.** Catechesis must prepare the disciple for meaningful and active participation in the liturgical life of the Church in the sacraments and especially in the Eucharist. The disciple must learn to pray and contemplate God in daily life. (cf. GDC #85-86)
- (3) **instruct for moral formation and motivate Christian living and service.** Catechesis must teach and inspire the disciple to follow Jesus. He must be spiritually transformed to his image and made perfect in Christ. He must live the life of the Beatitudes and seek to meet the social demands of the Gospel through a life of service.
- (4) **build a sense of community and understand the Church as communal life.** Catechesis must prepare the disciple to live the faith in community and to participate actively in the life and mission of the Church.
- (5) **to foster a missionary initiative.** Catechesis must equip the disciple to be a holy witness in society, leading others to Christ and promoting the Kingdom. It should prepare him for genuine and charitable inter-religious and ecumenical dialogue.

These curriculum guidelines provide clear strategies for carrying out these six tasks with adults, adolescents and children.

### **Essential Partnership—Family, Parish Community, and Systematic Catechesis**

Catechesis is a collaborative effort. The family, the parish community, and those who serve as catechists in a parish or school religious education program, all work together to nurture the continuing faith development of learners throughout the life-cycle.

When parents bring their children to the waters of baptism they accept the responsibility of being the “primary educators in the ways of the faith”. In the sacrament of Matrimony, Christian parents receive the “grace and the ministry of Christian education of their children” (CL #62; FC #38). The family is always sharing faith, for good or ill, by its very life. For example, families who establish a regular pattern of prayer in the home teach that prayer is important. Families, who don’t pray, teach that prayer is not important. The family is the foundational setting where faith is shared and lived.

Parents communicate values and attitudes by sharing love for Christ and His Church and for each other, by reverently receiving the Eucharist and living in its spirit, and by fostering justice and love in all their relationships. (*NCD*, #212)

“Family catechesis precedes, accompanies and enriches all other forms of catechesis” (*CT*, #68). A family has no choice about whether it will share faith—its only choice is whether it will share faith well or poorly.

These guidelines provide suggestions for parish and school leaders to support and assist the family in carrying out its crucially important role in sharing our Catholic faith.

**The Parish Community**—is also an essential partner in nurturing faith. The entire parish community fosters or impedes faith development by the warmth of its welcome and hospitality (or lack of it), by the vibrance and prayerfulness of its worship (or lack of it), by the breadth and effectiveness of its outreach and service (or lack of it), and by the scope and authenticity of its systematic presentation of our Catholic faith (or lack of it).

Like the family, the parish community is always teaching faith. “Each of its members has a responsibility for the whole Church. Each has a duty to foster a living conscious and active faith community” (*NCD*, #221b). “The parish is, without doubt, the most important *locus* in which the Christian community is formed and expressed...the parish is also the usual place in which the faith is born and in which it grows. It constitutes, therefore, a very adequate community space for the realization of the ministry of the word as teaching, education and life experience”. (*GDC* #251) These guidelines also offer strategies for enhancing the role of the parish community in carrying out its responsibility of continual faith formation.

**Systematic Catechesis** — has a vitally important role in the formal and systematic presentation of our Catholic faith in accord with the stage of development of the participants throughout the life-cycle. Catechists act in the name of the Church in presenting the richness of the Catholic faith. Catechists need to be persons of deep faith and their lives should witness to that faith. They should be good Christian role models for their students and be able to relate well with those they are catechizing.

Catechists also need to be skilled in designing and implementing learning sessions so as to integrate authentic content that is in accord with these Archdiocesan Guidelines with appropriate learning activities that meaningfully engage the learners.

In imparting this instruction the teachers must observe an order and method suited not only to the matter in hand but also to the character, the ability, the age and the life-style of their audience. This instruction should be based on holy scripture, tradition, liturgy and on the teaching authority and life of the Church.

(Vatican Council II, *Decree on Bishops in the Church*, #14)

These guidelines include a description of the qualities needed by catechists who minister with the various age levels.

## **Catechists and Systematic Catechesis**

These guidelines give special and comprehensive emphasis on the presentation of the systematic content of catechesis for the various age levels. This exact order of the presentation of the content will vary somewhat depending on the situation in the local parish or school program. However, all of the content included in particular level should be presented by the time a participant completes that particular level. Note that the CCC, as a reference, is an authentic rule of faith; that systematic catechesis is necessary for growth to full maturity in the faith due to the progressive nature of divine revelation. The Gospel forms a coherent whole- all that God did “in times past and fragmentary ways” (Hebrews 1) has come to fulfillment in Christ. A systematic presentation of the faith is necessary for the disciple to see how Christ fulfills the Father’s plan and is revealed as the Savior of the world.

It is not within the authority of an individual catechist to add or eliminate elements of catechesis once the curriculum has been determined by the local leaders, pastor, director of religious education, school principal, etc. Changes for eliminating or adding to elements of the curriculum need to be authorized by one of the leaders indicated above.

The PARTNERSHIP of the FAMILY, the PARISH COMMUNITY, SYSTEMATIC CATECHESIS and CATECHISTS is essential if catechesis is to achieve its maximum effectiveness. These guidelines give clear and consistent direction for enhancing this essential partnership in providing authentic, life-long faith formation.

## **The Cultural Context**

Catechesis is never done in isolation. The family and the parish community are significant contexts within which systematic catechesis occurs. Additionally, catechesis takes place within several cultural contexts. The influence of the larger society (both positive and negative) is always a factor to consider.

“In the light of the Gospel, the Church must appropriate all the positive values of culture and the cultures and reject those elements which impede development of the true potential of persons and peoples” (GDC #21)

“Such discernment is governed by two basic principles: compatibility with the Gospel and communion with the universal Church” (GDC #109)

Catechesis must “promote a new expression of the Gospel in accordance with evangelized culture [...while maintaining] integrally the content of the faith [...without] defacing or falsifying the contents” (GDC #203)

“Inculturation of the faith, under certain aspects, is a linguistic task. This implies that catechesis respect and value the language proper to the message, especially biblical language, as well as historical-traditional language of the Church (creed, liturgy) and doctrinal language (dogmatic formulations) [...even while] entering into dialogue with forms and terms proper to the culture in which it has been planted” (GDC #208)

For example, the emphasis in our culture on the use of technology can be a very positive influence on catechesis when technology is used to present catechesis in a more vibrant, visual manner with which most persons are familiar today. But technology can also have a negative influence if it is used to present ideas or meanings that undermine or denigrate certain teachings of our faith.

In addition to the larger societal culture, catechesis is always influenced by the context of various ethnic and cultural groups. Different ethnic cultures have different ways of expressing themselves. These cultural patterns should be incorporated into the catechesis as much as possible when they enhance the sharing of faith. Sometimes, specific cultural patterns may need to be challenged and/or discussed to explore more deeply how they influence the sharing of faith. Catechists need to grow continually in their understanding of the possible positive and negative influences of the cultural contexts within which they carry out their ministry.

Many parishes and schools include significant numbers of African American, Hispanic, Asian and other cultural members in their program. Careful attention to the cultural patterns of these participants needs to be an important element of planning for catechesis.

## **SCOPE AND FORMAT OF THESE GUIDELINES**

These Archdiocesan Guidelines are organized in a particular order.

### **ORIENTED TO THE CATECHESIS OF ADULTS**

The expectations of Catholic **adults** are described first because all catechesis is oriented to the catechesis of adults.

Because of its importance and because all other forms of catechesis are oriented in some way to it, the catechesis of adults must have high priority at all levels of the Church. The success of programs for children and youth depends to a significant extent upon the words, attitudes, and actions of the adult community, especially parents, family and guardians. (NCD, #188)

Catechists and catechetical leaders in all situations (parishes, schools, etc.) need to give attention to the section on the catechesis of adults in order to continue **their own faith formation** as well as to be thoroughly familiar with what is expected of Catholic adults so that they can **orient the catechesis of adolescents and children** toward adult discipleship and provide the needed foundation and continuing growth for authentic adult living.

The section on adult catechesis should receive serious attention by catechists and catechetical leaders at all levels because this section describes the expectation they (catechists and catechetical leaders) should have for themselves. The adult catechesis section provides direction and content for catechist formation sessions, faculty meetings, staff development days and other opportunities for all adults involved in catechesis to grow in faith themselves.

This section is also important for designing sessions for parents as part of Home-School meetings, Sacramental Preparation programs and other opportunities for assisting parents to grow in faith and to share their faith with their children.

**Adolescents** experience significant challenges of physical, psychological and spiritual growth as they strive to be searching and challenging disciples of Jesus. Adolescent catechesis is an important bridge in assisting young people in building on their faith experience as children as they progress toward adult discipleship.

**Children** benefit from a strong foundation in the fundamental aspects of our faith in order to grow vibrant roots that can develop into a strong faith expression later in life.

Catechists at all levels need to be familiar with the expectations of catechesis at the previous and later levels so that catechesis is cohesive and continuing in the lives of children, adolescents and adults in the life-long journey of faith formation.

## **LEVELS – NOT INDIVIDUAL GRADES**

These curriculum guidelines are organized by levels (which include several grades or ages) and not by individual grades. These curriculum guidelines do not provide a “course of study” in the usual sense as that term is used in schooling situations. This has been done to give clear direction for the overall implementation of catechesis throughout the Archdiocese of Baltimore while allowing some flexibility for differences in local situations.

Catechesis is more than a course—in which various content topics are presented and expected to be learned. Catechesis does include the presentation of topics to be learned, but it also includes the expectation that the content of the catechesis is to be believed and lived. Such

greater expectations require that the catechist/teacher be a believer, and that the entire catechetical process involve the partnership of the family, the parish community and the systematic catechetical program. Such a demanding endeavor also requires that there be some flexibility in the order of programming to promote the maximum participation by all those involved.

For example, the overall direction of catechesis should be the same in a Catholic School and a religious education program in a particular parish, but there could be some differences between these two programs in the order of presenting specific topics. Also, a small rural parish may present concepts in the children's level in a different order from a large suburban parish, but all the concepts are present by the time a student completes the children's level.

### **USING THESE GUIDELINES**

These curriculum guidelines are intended to be a helpful tool for parish and school leaders in reviewing and improving their current religious education efforts. These guidelines have been developed in accord with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and *The General Directory for Catechesis*, and the various concepts and topics presented in the guidelines are referenced to the appropriate section in the Catechism. These guidelines provide an authentic synthesis of the teachings of the Church as presented in the Catechism, presented in an order and grouping that responds to the age and stage of development of the participants.

The guidelines assist parish and school leaders in determining those areas of Catholic teaching that are currently well presented and those areas that need more attention. Once such a review has been done, then a review of the textbooks and materials used can be initiated.

The guidelines should also be used as guides for discussion at catechist, teacher and parent meetings to give an overview of the direction and topics for life-long catechesis in the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

An overview of these guidelines will be helpful in assisting parents to understand their important role in catechesis and the partnership they have with the parish community and the systematic catechesis presented in a Catholic School or parish religious education program. For those parents who home-school their children, these guidelines should be a helpful tool for planning the religion curriculum for their children.

These guidelines will also be very helpful to catechetical leaders planning adult education programs that are responsible for the spiritual needs of adults coping with the stresses and demands of the secular world.

It is important to realize that these guidelines are intended as a planning document rather than a teaching document. These guidelines are not intended for catechists or teachers to use for designing a lesson plan or as a reference in the classroom or learning session. Rather, the overall direction of the catechetical curriculum and the topics to be presented can help with the

selection of specific textbooks and other materials are to be used in the actual teaching-learning activity.

## **INTERACTION WITH OTHER ARCHDIOCESAN DOCUMENTS**

These curriculum guidelines provide a synthesis of Catholic teaching that is to be presented, but this document cannot be used alone. Several other Archdiocesan documents must also be used in conjunction with these guidelines in order to develop a comprehensive catechetical curriculum. The areas for which other documents are needed are the following:

### **SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION**

These curriculum guidelines do address the understanding of the sacraments in each of the levels in the section entitled "Prayer and Worship." However, the presentation of these topics is part of the responsibility to provide remote catechesis and continuing catechesis for the sacraments. The immediate catechesis for preparing for a specific sacrament is provided through the sacramental preparation program offered by the parish.

The two documents that provide the regulations and guidelines for these programs are: *Signs of God's Love*, which includes regulations and guidelines for the celebration of the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, Reconciliation and Eucharist, and *The Seal Of The Spirit*, more specific regulations and guidelines for the celebration of Confirmation.

### **CATECHESIS FOR HUMAN SEXUALITY**

It is the policy of the Archdiocese of Baltimore that catechesis for human sexuality be an integral element of catechesis for adults, adolescents and children in all parishes and schools. The document that describes the regulations and guidelines in this area is *Catechesis For Human Sexuality*. This document needs to be used in close interaction with these curriculum guidelines to insure that catechesis for human sexuality is fully incorporated in the parish or school catechetical curriculum. It is most important that parents, the primary educators of their children, be fully involved in programs for human sexuality in accord with the teachings of the church and relevant archdiocesan norms.

### **CATECHESIS WITH THOSE WHO ARE DEVELOP AND MENTALLY CHALLENGED**

These guidelines do not directly address the learning needs of those who experience mental retardation. However, the Archdiocese of Baltimore can recommend several excellent catechetical resources.

The *Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Program to Improve Catholic Religious Education for Children and Adults with Mental Retardation*. 1996, developed by the Diocese of Pittsburgh,

Grace Harding, Director, Department for Persons with Disabilities, 48 South 14<sup>th</sup> Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15203; Phone 412-481-9550. This resource is available for \$65.00 through Silver Burdett Ginn Publishing Company; Phone 1-800-848-9500.

Background document:

*Pastoral Statement of U.S. Catholic Bishops on Persons with Disabilities*, November 16, 1978, United States Catholic Conference, Distributed by the National Catholic Office of Persons with Disabilities (NCOPD), Mary Jane Owens, Executive Director, 401 Michigan Avenue, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20017; 202-529-2933.

For Sacramental Preparation, please consult the following resources and texts:

*Growing Together in Jesus: A Program for Adults with Mental Retardation*, Brigid O'Donnell. Harper and Row Publishers, San Francisco, 1984.

*Guidelines for Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities*, Origins, CNS Documentary Service, June 29, 1995, Volume 25. No.7. Available through the National Apostolate for Inclusion Ministry, P.O. Box 3070, Laurel, Md. 20709. Phone 1-800-736-1280. Mrs. Cheryl Hall, Executive Director.

*Developmental Disabilities and Sacramental Access*, New Paradigms for Sacramental Encounters, Edward Foley, Editor, 1994, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota.

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The Coordinator of Special Religious Education, Division of Religious Education, is available to help with any curriculum planning for persons with disabilities. Phone: 410-547-5403.

## **FORMATION OF CATECHISTS**

These guidelines describe the topics that are to be presented in catechetical programs, and it is presumed that these topics are presented by believing, committed and properly prepared catechists. The document *Faith Lived—Faith Shared, Regulations for the Formation and Certification of Catechists*, describes the areas of growth and procedures for the continuing formation and Archdiocesan certification of those who serve as catechists and religion teachers.

## **SELECTION OF TEXTBOOKS**

While these guidelines do specify which topics are to be presented, there are several excellent textbook series that can be used to present these topics. The Division of Religious Education has published a tool for use by parish and school leaders in reviewing and selecting a text series that is most helpful for their local situation. This tool is *How to Choose Catechetical Textbooks, Process and Criteria*. This booklet is available from the Division of Religious Education, and it describes both criteria for the evaluation of catechetical texts as well as a process to be followed by a parish or school committee.

## ASSISTANCE IN IMPLEMENTING THESE GUIDELINES

The staffs of the Division of Religious Education and the Division of Youth and Young Adult Ministry are ready to offer consultation and assistance to parish and school leaders in implementing these guidelines. Please call on the staff if you have questions or would like suggestions for helping your local leaders and catechists in understanding the content of the guidelines and using them appropriately in reviewing and developing your catechetical curriculum.

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**Children:** Sylvia DeVillers & Loyes Spayd

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May these guidelines be an important guide and aid in the development of effective and successful catechesis in the parishes and schools of the Archdiocese so that all adults, adolescents and children may faithfully resound the Good News.

## ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations have been used throughout this document.

- AA            *Apostolicam Actuositatem: Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People.* Vatican Council II, 1965.
- ACCC        *Adult Catechesis in the Christian Community:* International Council for Catechesis, 1992.
- AG            *Ad Gentes: Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity.* Vatican Council II, 1965.
- CAC         *The Challenge of Adolescent Catechesis: Maturing in Faith,* NFCYM, 1986.
- CCC         *The Catechism of the Catholic Church.* Liberia Editrice Vaticana, 1994.
- CCYE        *The Challenge of Catholic Youth Evangelization: Called to Be Witnesses and Storytellers,* NFCYM, 1993.

- CD *Christus Dominus: Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church.* Vatican Council II, 1965.
- CG *Called and Gifted: the American Catholic Laity.* National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1980.
- CGTM *Called and Gifted for the Third Millennium.* National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1995.
- CHS *Catechesis for Human Sexuality: Regulations and Guidelines.* Archdiocese of Baltimore, 1994.
- CIC *Codex Iuris Canonici: The Code of Canon Law.* Liberia Editrice Vaticana, 1983.
- CHL *Christifideles Laici: The Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World.* John Paul II, 1988.
- CT *Catechesi Tradendae: On Catechesis in Our Time.* Pope John Paul II, 1979.
- DV *Dei Verbum: The Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation* Vatican II, November 18, 1965.
- EGHL *Educational Guidance in Human Love.* Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1983.
- EN *Evangelii Nuntiandi: On Evangelization in the Modern World.* Pope Paul IV, 1975.
- EV *Evangelium Vitae: The Gospel of Life.* Pope John Paul II, 1995.
- FC *Familiaris Consortio: The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World.* Pope John Paul II, 1981.
- FLFS *Faith Lived - - Faith Shared: Regulations for the Formation and Certification of Catechists.* Archdiocese of Baltimore, 1991.
- FPCS *A Family Perspective in Church Society.* National Conference of Catholic Bishops Ad Hoc Committee on Marriage and Family Life, 1988.
- GCD *General Catechetical Directory: Congregation for the Clergy,* 1971.
- GDC *General Directory for Catechesis.* Congregation for the Clergy, 1997
- GDSCM *Guidelines for Doctrinally Sound Catechetical Materials.* United States Catholic Conference, 1990.

- GE *Gravissimum Educationis Declaration on Christian Education.* Vatican Council II, 1965.
- GS *Gaudium et Spes: Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World.* Vatican Council II, 1965.
- HIA *Here I Am, Send Me: A Conference Response to the Evangelization of African Americans and the National Black Catholic Pastoral Plan,* National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1989.
- HS:ACP *Human Sexuality: A Catholic Perspective for Education and Lifelong Learning.* United States Catholic Bishops, 1991.
- IYF John Paul II, *International Year of the Family - Letter,* 1994
- LG *Lumen Gentium: Dogmatic Constitution on the Church.* Vatican Council II, 1964.
- MYPH *Message to Youth: Pathway to Hope,* NCCB Committee on the Laity, USCC, 1994.
- NCD *Sharing the Light of Faith: The National Catechetical Directory for Catholics in the United States.* National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1979.
- PCFF *Putting Children and Families First.* National Conference of Catholic Bishops, United States Catholic Conference, 1991.
- RCIA *The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.* National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1988.
- RM *Redemptoris Missio: On The Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate.* Pope John Paul II, 1990.
- RTV *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry.* National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1997.
- SDL *Sons and Daughters of the Light.* National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1996.
- SGL *Signs of God's Love: Regulations and Guidelines for Catechesis and Celebration of Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, and Penance.* Archdiocese of Baltimore, 1987.
- SLF *Serving Life and Faith: Adult Religious Education and the American Catholic Community.* Department of Education, United States Catholic Conference.

- T & M      *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality: Guidelines for Education Within the Family.* Pontifical Council for the Family, 1996.
- TJD         *To Teach as Jesus Did: A Pastoral Message on Catholic Education.* National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1972.
- VYM         *Vision of Youth Ministry,* Department of Education, USCC, 1976.

## ADULTS

### INTRODUCTION

"[T]he primary reason for adult catechesis—its first and essential objective—is to help adults themselves grow to maturity of faith as members of the Church and society" (NCD, #40).

Since catechesis for adults and in support of the maturing faith of Christian adulthood is "the summit of the entire catechetical enterprise" and "the center of the Church's educational mission," (NCD, #40; cf. ACCC, #25,34) and since "every form of catechesis is oriented in some way to the catechesis of adults," (NCD, #32; cf. ACCC, #35 and TJD, #47) we begin our curriculum guidelines with the section on adult catechesis.

### **Religious Education Curriculum Guidelines for Adult Catechetical Ministry**

When we speak of "curriculum guidelines" for adult catechesis, we are adopting the language of school administration ("curriculum") for the context of parish life and ministry. We seek to provide some substance and clarity to encourage and assist local catechetical ministers in their task of identifying and developing a useful set of principles and guidelines for planning and implementing their adult catechetical ministry. Our hope and goal is to help them provide truly

worthwhile and fruitful opportunities, for the adults among and with whom they minister, to grow in faith and in Christian living.

### **Accepting the Gospel of Life and Living the Gift of Faith**

All the Church's life and ministry is founded on a bedrock of good news: namely, God's "plan of loving goodness" for all creation (CCC, #50). We believe that God has made us for the gift of life—for

a fullness of life which far exceeds the dimensions of [our] earthly existence, because it consists in sharing the very life of God. The loftiness of this supernatural vocation reveals the *greatness* and the *inestimable value* of human life even in its temporal phase. Life in time, in fact, is the fundamental condition, the initial stage and an integral part of the entire unified process of human existence. It is a process which, unexpectedly and undeservedly, is enlightened by the promise and renewed by the gift of divine life (cf. *1 Jn* 3:1-2). At the same time, it is precisely this supernatural calling which highlights the *relative character* of each individual's earthly life. After all, life on earth is not an 'ultimate' but a 'penultimate' reality; even so, it remains a *sacred reality* entrusted to us, to be preserved with a sense of responsibility and brought to perfection in love and in the gift of ourselves to God and to our brothers and sisters (EV, #2).

This "Gospel of life is at the heart of Jesus' message. Lovingly received day after day by the Church, it is to be preached with dauntless fidelity as 'good news' to the people of every age and culture" (EV, #1). This is the Church's essential mission of evangelization: to witness and share this message of the life God has made us for and the way of life God calls us to follow.

Faith is our human response to this divine calling. It is faith which opens us to the grace of God that makes us new creatures and part of the new creation (Cf. *Rom* 5:1-2, *2 Cor* 5:17, *Gal* 6:15, *Eph* 4:17-24, *Col* 3:5ff.; CCC #1265), able to live the new life that is God's gift to us in Christ, who came "so that they might have life and have it more abundantly." (*Jn* 10:10; cf. EV, #1)

Following in the footsteps of Jesus, we become his disciples. Faithful to his teaching and example, we enter into the fullness and fruitfulness of this new life through a paschal mystery of dying and rising: "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit" (*Jn* 12:24). This paschal mystery shows us in what our true human dignity and calling consists. It reveals that our "greatness, and therefore [our] vocation, consists in *the sincere gift of self*" (EV, #25), which is to take place "above all in *daily living*, which should be filled with self-giving love for others" (EV, #86).

We are called to this life of love by God, who gives us the grace and strength to respond: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not from you; it is the gift of God" (*Eph* 2:8).

Baptism, "the sacrament of faith," is our gateway to this way of life; (CCC, #1253; cf. CCC, #1213) it is our "first sacramental sharing in Christ's dying and rising" (RCIA, #8), and it "signifies and actually brings about death to sin and entry into the life of the Most Holy Trinity through configuration to the Paschal mystery of Christ" (CCC, #1239).

### **Faith: Personal and Ecclesial**

Each individual person is called by God to accept and share in this gift of life and love; faith is thus a profoundly personal act. But the life of faith and love cannot be lived alone: "No one can believe alone, just as no one can live alone" (CCC, #166). And so faith is at once both personal and ecclesial—*personal*, because it is "the free response of the human person to the initiative of God" (CCC, #166), and *ecclesial* because the whole "Church's faith precedes, engenders, supports, and nourishes" the faith of the individual persons who are the Church (CCC, #181).

### **ADULT CATECHESIS: A COMMON VISION**

Because faith is alive, we must tend and cultivate it for fruitfulness through a lifetime. Because faith is both ecclesial and personal, we each grow in faith as members of the community of faith. Consequently, as a prerequisite for providing the most fruitful context for adult growth in faith, and as a goal for our ministry, our vision of adult catechesis must recognize the need

to build *adult Christian communities*.... These communities must express a clear faith identity and must be centered on a clear proclamation of the Gospel, a meaningful celebration of the liturgy and a courageous witness in charity (ACCC, #35).

A community with these priorities is able to help its members to cultivate

a harmonious and vital synthesis of the essential characteristics of the Christian, appropriate for adults.... These characteristics are an obedient listening to the Word of God, communion with the faith community, and the service of charity and witness in the world (ACCC, #38).

### **ADULT CATECHESIS: THREE PRINCIPAL GOALS**

With these three characteristics of the adult Christian in mind (that is, obedient listening to God's word, communion with the faith community, and the service of charity and witness), we can identify the following three corresponding goals for adult disciples through their participation in catechetical ministry.

#### **( 1) TO ACQUIRE AN ATTITUDE OF CONVERSION TO THE LORD.**

The first and enduring goal of adult catechesis is to assist maturing disciples "to acquire an attitude of *conversion to the Lord*" (ACCC, #36).

Conversion consists in "a profound change of the whole person, by which one begins to consider, judge, and arrange his life according to the holiness and love of God, made manifest in his Son..." (Paul VI, *Paenitemini*, cited in *RP*, #6.a). This conversion is ongoing throughout life. Once we choose to follow Jesus more closely, if we do not turn back he will keep leading us where we had never thought to go, showing us how to live, asking us to serve, transformed by self-giving love.

In order to walk this pathway we must cultivate an *attitude* of conversion, keep our hearts open to the Lord, seek reconciliation with God and neighbor, and accept God's call and plan by living a life pleasing to God and by growing in holiness, judging all things in the light of faith (cf. ACCC, #36).

This first goal of adult catechesis cultivates the *personal* dimension of faith. It is a call to *holiness*—growing in Jesus Christ. [See the first call in *CGTM* (pp. 2ff.), and Part Two of *SDL* (esp. pp. 18-19)]

## **(2) TO LIVE THE GIFT AND CHOICE OF FAITH THROUGH MEMBERSHIP IN THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY.**

"The catechesis of adults aims at bringing to fruition a conscious and firm decision to live the gift and choice of faith through *membership in the Christian community*" (ACCC, #37).

A living member of the Christian community will contribute to its life by sharing in its mission and service. In the Church as in any living body, "no member plays a purely passive part...: 'the whole Body achieves full growth in dependence on the full functioning of each part' (*Eph* 4:16)" (AA, #2).

We fulfill this goal by joining with others in "a community whose way of life as disciples of Christ is shared by all," and by accepting our "coresponsibility for the community's mission and internal life" (ACCC, #37).

This second goal of adult catechesis cultivates the *ecclesial* dimension of faith. It is a call to *community*—nourishing faith. [See the second call in *CGTM* (pp. 9ff.), and Part Two in *SDL* (esp. pp. 19-21)]

## **(3) TO BE A CHRISTIAN DISCIPLE IN THE WORLD.**

"Adult catechesis makes one more willing and able to be a *Christian disciple in the world*" (ACCC, #38).

The opportunities that adult laypersons have for sharing the gospel of life and contributing to the "renewal of the temporal order" (AA, #7) are almost unlimited.

Their own field of evangelizing activity is the vast and complicated world of politics, society and economics, as well as the world of culture, of the sciences and the arts, of international life, of the mass media. It also includes other realities which are open to evangelization, such as human love, the family, the education of children and adolescents, professional work, and suffering. The more Gospel-inspired lay people there are engaged in these realities, clearly involved in them, competent to promote them and conscious that they must exercise to the full their Christian powers which are often repressed and buried, the more these realities will be at the service of the Kingdom of God and therefore at the service of salvation in Jesus Christ, without in any way losing or sacrificing their human content but rather pointing to a transcendent dimension which is often disregarded (*EN*, #70; *CL*, #23; *ACCC*, #27).

Adults fulfill this goal when they learn to identify and distinguish the good and evil in their culture, draw others toward faith and love, share with them the reasons for our hope, resonate with the longings of people for liberation and salvation, and work for the transformation of society by the light of the gospel (cf. *ACCC*, #38).

This third goal cultivates the mission and service dimensions of faith, preparing us for concrete ways of making the sincere gift of self in the context of daily life. This goal highlights our Christian calling to faith and to holiness in "the temporal order," and it serves the Church's mission of giving a living witness to the love of Christ. It is a call to *service*—living faith in the world. [See the third call in *CGTM* (pp. 14ff.), and Part Two in *SDL* (esp. pp. 21-22)]

## **ADULT CATECHESIS: TEN PRINCIPLES AND PRIORITIES**

In pursuing the common vision of adult catechesis (building adult Christian communities) and in meeting its three principal goals (acquiring an attitude of conversion, choosing active membership in the Christian community, and being disciples in the world), it will be helpful for parish pastoral leaders and program planners to keep in mind some basic perspectives expressed in Church documents and affirmed by pastoral experience.

Consider, then, the following principles and priorities as a basis for reviewing what you have done, conducting what you currently do, and designing what you plan to do to help the adults in your community to grow and mature in a living faith.

### **(1) ADULT CATECHESIS IS THE PRINCIPAL FORM OF CATECHESIS; IT REQUIRES AND DESERVES THE BEST OF OUR PASTORAL RESOURCES AND ENERGIES.** [“The

*Magisterium of the Church*, imbued with the spirit of renewal of the Second Vatican Council (cf. *CD* 14; *AG* 14) has constantly affirmed with authority, clarity and insistence, the centrality and importance of the catechesis of adults” (*ACCC*, #4).

*“Perhaps, no other activity of the Church is as pervasive as its educational ministry with adults....It is no wonder, then, that both the General Catechetical Directory and Sharing the Light of Faith: National Catechetical Directory for Catholics of the United States speak of the primacy of adult catechesis (GCD 20; NCD 32). Also, the American bishops in their pastoral message on Catholic Education, To Teach As Jesus*

*Did, placed the continuing education of adults at the center of the Church's educational mission (43)" (SLF, #12-13).*

"Finally, formal programs of adult education at the parish and diocesan levels deserve adequate attention and support, including professional staffing and realistic funding. Adult education should also have a recognized place in the structure of church-sponsored education at all levels, parish, diocesan and national" (SLF, #46).

"Adult religious education is no mere educational icing on the cake, something to be undertaken when the needs of the rest of the Church's teaching mission have been met. It is essential to who we are and what we do as Church" (SLF, #157).

"By reason of its special position and the contribution it makes to the growth of the whole community's faith journey, the catechesis of adults must be regarded as a preferential option" (ACCC, #29)]

Catechesis serves the life and mission of the Church. In fulfilling that mission, adults "have the greatest responsibilities and the capacity to live the Christian message in its fully developed form" (CT, #43).

In order for adults to live the life of faith and serve the mission of the Church most fruitfully, fulfilling their responsibilities and their capacity to grow in knowledge and love, they have a right and an obligation to be catechized; the Church has a corresponding right and obligation to provide catechesis. Indeed, "a fully Christian community can exist only when a systematic catechesis of all its members takes place and when an effective and well-developed catechesis of adults is regarded as the *central task* in the catechetical enterprise" (ACCC, #25).

To carry out this central task with the vigor it requires and deserves, we need to cultivate "a real passion for catechesis, a passion embodied in a pertinent and effective organization, putting into effect the necessary personnel, means and equipment, and also financial resources" (CT, #63). These words were originally addressed to bishops, but they pertain to everyone who bears responsibility for catechesis. Each of us can take these words to heart in a way appropriate to our respective ecclesial roles; all of us must respect their particular relevance to the ministry of adult catechesis, as "the principal form of catechesis" (CT, #43).

**(2) ADULT CATECHESIS IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE OVERALL PASTORAL PLAN OF THE PARISH.** ["The catechesis of adults, therefore, can bear fruit only *within the overall pastoral plan* of the local Church communities" (ACCC, #29).

"While the community, such as a parish or a Newman Center, is shaped in part by the educational process, it exercises its own influence on its members through rituals, structures, and mission. This influence is, in many cases, far stronger than organized educational activities. *There is no question that participative liturgies, collaborative decision-making structures, and a strong sense of social mission promote and support formal learning. Indeed, without them, adult religious education is like the seed planted in rocky soil; its chances of genuine growth are slim (Lk 8:6).*

"Adult religious education should be a ministry that is neither independent from nor isolated within the local community. It needs to relate to and collaborate with the other ministries, such as worship, the catechumenate, and Christian service. Indeed, the very experiences of these other activities frequently become important topics for further reflection in adult religious education. At the same time, adult religious education helps prepare members of the community for exercising leadership in other ministries" (SLF, #123-124)]

The whole life of the parish or local faith community is the actual context in which adult catechesis takes place, and it is a powerful formative agent in that catechetical process. The parish's liturgical life and preaching, its social life, its service of the needy and advocacy for justice, the style of parish administration, and the vitality and degree of parishioner collaboration in the various aspects of the life and ministries of the parish—these and other factors affect the way adult catechesis is conducted and experienced.

When the life of the community of faith is strong and vibrant, our specific and planned catechetical activities for adults are well supported; to the extent that the life or ministry of the community is weak, it is harder for catechesis to be effective.

When there is an overall pastoral plan which promotes the active life and ministries of the community in a coordinated way, we are more likely to thrive and grow in faith, to develop a vibrant common life and worship, and to be active and fruitful in serving the mission of the Church and the needs of people in parish and society.

Adult catechetical ministers will support this overall pastoral plan and the allocation of parish resources that can best implement it.

At the same time, all parish leadership should recognize the value of making sure that adult catechesis in its various forms has a "distinctive place" (ACCC, #29) in this comprehensive pastoral plan. Adult catechetical ministry directly serves the realization of the parish pastoral plan, for it "aims at making adults constructive participants in the life and mission of the community" (ibid.) by strengthening their faith, encouraging their zeal, and sharpening their skills. We affirm here the wisdom of Pope John Paul II when he wrote: "You can be sure that if catechesis is done well in your local Churches, everything else will be easier to do" (CT, #63). This will be especially true of adult catechesis, the principal form of catechesis.

### **(3) THE WHOLE POINT OF ADULT CHRISTIAN LEARNING IS ADULT CHRISTIAN LIVING.**

["Furthermore, catechesis does not consist merely in the teaching of doctrine: it also means initiating into the whole of Christian life..." (CT, #33; cf. #20).

"The Catechism emphasizes the exposition of doctrine. It seeks to help deepen understanding of faith. In this way it is oriented toward the maturing of that faith, its putting down roots in personal life and its shining forth in personal conduct" (CCC, #23).

"Adult religious education should strive not only to impart instruction to adults but to enable them better to assume responsibility for the building of community and for Christian service in the world" (TJD, #48).

"When it comes to learning and attendance at educational programs, adults are primarily motivated by needs stemming from their life tasks (e.g., as family provider, as parent, as seeker of personal growth, as professional, as child of aging parents, as members of the world community). These challenges or tasks are also key means by which the learner hears God's voice. For this reason, adult religious education should be life-centered" (SLF, #117)]

Catechesis aims to enable people of faith to know more deeply and live more fully the good news of God's love. Adult catechesis seeks not only to enlighten and inform the minds of adults with the light of the gospel and the Church's teaching; it seeks to enliven and transform their way of living in accord with the message of love which the Church proclaims and which Jesus revealed by his words and by his life, death and resurrection.

Even when our catechetical ministry focuses specifically on the knowledge of doctrine, it should do so in order to inform and nourish a living faith that takes root and bears fruit in personal and social life (cf. CCC, #23). "The whole concern of doctrine and its teaching must be directed to the love that never ends" (CCC, #25).

Three insights from the GDC (#175) regarding the goals of adult catechesis are:

1. an integral and systematic presentation of the faith and moral teachings with discussions of contemporary criticisms and misunderstandings which would better equip the faithful to "give an account of what they believe;"
2. introduction to the Scriptures and the Catechism of the Catholic Church;
3. clarification about the relationship between temporal and ecclesial action

Whatever else it involves, then, good adult catechesis is always oriented toward the practice of faith in daily life. It takes into consideration the many spheres of adult life: personal spirituality and family relationships, household budgeting and public policy, education and mass media, life in the neighborhood, the nation and the international community, political choices and appreciation of the arts, the world of work and the world of leisure. Adult catechesis addresses the many conditions of human life—prosperity and hardship, sickness and health, suffering and joy—so that adults may learn how to be faithful in all circumstances.

Good adult catechesis is down-to-earth and in touch with real life, so as to be able to help adults to recognize the Lord's call in all these various circumstances in which they actually live. It will help them respond to that call with fidelity to the radical challenge of the gospel and to the Church's social and moral teachings. It will help adults to acquire the skills to fulfill their calling as human persons and Christian disciples, and also to cultivate the spiritual practices that will sustain their maturing faithful discipleship over the course of a lifetime.

#### **(4) GOOD ADULT CATECHESIS INVOLVES ADULTS ACTIVELY IN THE ACTUAL LIFE AND MINISTRY OF THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY.**

[“A person who has given adherence to Jesus Christ by faith and is endeavoring to consolidate that faith by catechesis needs to live in communion with those who have taken the same step.... That is why the ecclesial community at all levels has a twofold responsibility with regard to catechesis: it has the responsibility of providing for the training of its members, but it also has the responsibility of welcoming them into an environment where they can live as fully as possible what they have learned” (CT, #24).

“Community is at the heart of Christian education not simply as a concept to be taught but as a reality to be lived. Through education, men must be moved to build community in all areas of life; they can do this best if they have learned the meaning of community by experiencing it. Formed by this experience, they are better able to build community in their families, their places of work, their neighborhoods, their nation, their world” (TJD, #23).

"Learning in faith is not simply a matter between ourselves and God. *As believers, God comes to us in and through community.* Our very approach to God through learning is influenced by the experiences we share with our local community of faith and with the wider Christian community.... All members of the faith community are co-responsible for its growth and for making it a sacrament of the risen Christ.... One of the primary reasons that we continue our learning in the Church is to be able to exercise our gifts on its behalf. Each of us is called upon to reach out in mission to others, to represent the Church in addressing the needs of the wider community" (SLF, #62-64)]

Life is a powerful teacher. When we have the actual experience of being with people, for example, whose faith is searching, trusting, joyful and peaceful, who study and pray with God's word, who want to do what pleases Jesus, who respect and care for one another, who pray together in the liturgy and at other community gatherings as well as privately and with their family at home, who act both on their own initiative and also together to serve the needs and promote the rights of others, who give witness to the good news—such an experience of Christian community life and service will more powerfully teach what it means to be a person of faith and a living member of the Church than will even the most competent instruction in Catholic doctrine or practice alone.

In short: "Adults do not grow in faith primarily by learning concepts, but by sharing the life of the Christian community" (ACCC, #28). In designing learning opportunities and situations, then, those who plan adult catechesis will focus not only on the class or large group event or small group setting, but on the many ways parishioners associate and act together as people of faith.

**(5) GOOD ADULT CATECHESIS RESPECTS THE MANY DIFFERENT PREFERRED LEARNING STYLES AND LEARNING NEEDS OF ADULTS; WHATEVER OUR METHODS, HOWEVER, WE WILL TREAT ADULTS LIKE ADULTS, RESPECT THEIR EXPERIENCE, AND ACTIVELY INVOLVE THEM IN THE LEARNING PROCESS.** ["It is essential that such programs [of adult religious education] recognize not only the particular needs of adults, but also their maturity and experience. Those who teach in the name of the Church do not simply instruct adults, but also learn from them; they will only be heard by adults if they listen to them. For this reason adult programs must be planned and conducted in ways that emphasize self-direction, dialogue, and mutual responsibility" (TJD, #44).

"Learners are vastly different. They approach the learning process from different levels of development, motivation, social roles, cultural perspectives, and preferred learning styles. As much as possible, the educational design reflects these differences and affords learners a variety of learning experiences that meet their unique situations and abilities. We encourage an eclectic approach to programming to meet the varying needs of learners who make up today's Catholic community" (SLF, #115)]

"Above all, one must begin by *accepting adults where they are*" (ACCC, #56), in terms of their faith, their life situation, and their preferred learning styles. Otherwise adults will avoid our catechetical programs and ministries, as being out-of-touch with their real circumstances and concerns.

"The Church, in transmitting the faith, does not have a particular method nor any single method. Rather she discerns contemporary methods in the light of the pedagogy of God [...]

She assumes those methods which are not contrary to the Gospel and places them at her service” (GDC 148)

“The principle of “fidelity to God and fidelity to man” leads to an avoidance of any opposition or artificial separation or presumed neutrality between method and content [...] The catechist recognizes that method is at the service of revelation and conversion and that therefore it is necessary to make use of it. The catechist knows that the content of catechesis cannot be indifferently subjected to any method [...] a good catechetical method is a guarantee of fidelity to content” (GDC #149)

Both the kerygmatic and the experiential methods are legitimate- it is important to give proper witness to both: the Christian life is both *grace and nature, human and divine, doctrine and experience* (GDC #150-151)

Need to make good use of the many technical means of social communication (GDC #160)

Good adult catechesis acknowledges the experience adults have acquired through living, and invites them to reflect upon it in the light of faith and to share what they have learned with others. Accordingly,

Of fundamental importance is the *dialogical approach* which, while recognizing that all are called to the obedience of faith (*Rm 1,5*), respects the basic freedom and autonomy of adults and encourages them to engage in an open and cordial dialogue. In this way they can make known their needs and can participate, as they should, as subjects or agents in their own catechesis and in that of others (*ACCC, #57*).

## **(6) THE CATECHUMENATE IS A PRIMARY MODEL FOR ALL ADULT CATECHESIS.**

[“The Synod of 1977 affirmed that ‘the model of all catechesis’ is the catechumenate.... According to ancient tradition, every form of catechesis should be inspired by the catechumenal model” (*ACCC, #66*)]

What characterizes the catechumenal model?

It is a form of catechesis that is focused on Christ. It cultivates an openness to the Holy Spirit. It is deeply rooted in the liturgy. It takes place in the midst of and with the involvement of the community. It allows time for faith to grow and mature, and it celebrates in prayer and ritual the stages of that growth. It varies according to the needs and circumstances of individuals as well as the many forms of God's grace manifested in their lives. It aims at formation and training in the Christian way of life.

The catechumenate attends to the whole person of faith—to the adult as one who learns and thinks about the gospel message and the Church's teaching (cf. *RCIA, #75.1*), who makes moral choices for daily living with the example and support of the community of faith (*#75.2*), who worships God in liturgical and personal prayer (*#75.3*), and who witnesses to the gospel and serves others in Church and society (*#75.4*).

"Precisely because the catechesis of adults aims at living the Christian life in all its fullness and integrity, the process outlined in the *catechumenate* seems the most appropriate model and should be encouraged everywhere, though it cannot be considered the exclusive model" (ACCC, #66).

**(7) GOOD ADULT CATECHESIS RESPECTS THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY AND FOSTERS ITS MISSION IN CHURCH AND SOCIETY.**

["Within adult religious education, the family plays a special role.... Much success is found today in developing adult religious education programs that are family based and intergenerational in nature (*Catechesi Tradendae*, 45).

"Because the family plays such an important role in learners' lives, adult education processes should afford them opportunities to reflect on the implications of their learning for family life.... *Adult religious education programming ought not to engage learners as if they have no context.* Most learners come out of family situations, and many topics and processes will have ramifications for their lives back home" (SLF, #126-127)]

Our faith community rightly speaks of the family as the domestic Church, or the Church of the home. Jesus' disciples are called to exercise there the priesthood of the baptized (CCC, #1657), and practice there the virtues of human and Christian living. More specifically, the tasks of the Christian family—which are also important topics for adult catechesis—include: forming a community of persons in the family, serving life both physically (by bringing children into the world) and spiritually (through Christian upbringing), participating in the development of society, and sharing in the life and mission of the Church (FC, Part 3; FPCS, Chapter 4).

Those who plan adult catechesis will also keep in mind the diverse configurations and relationships of adults and their families, and try to design programs and services in such a way as to foster rather than ignore or detract from the family lives of adults. Adult catechetical programming will seek to help adults live the life of faith more fully in the context of their own "domestic Church," learning from and contributing to the life and the faith of those people who, by God's providence, are their family.

**(8) CATECHESIS FOR ADULTS HELPS THEM RECOGNIZE AND FULFILL THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THEIR LIVES IN A SPIRIT OF FAITH AND FIDELITY TO GOD'S CALL.**

"Much effective learning comes from reflecting upon one's experiences in the light of faith. Adults must be helped to translate such reflection into practical steps to meet their responsibilities in a Christian manner" (NCD, #185.b). Good adult catechesis provides the setting in which adults may reflect together upon their changing roles and responsibilities throughout life, hear the word of God offering them guidance, challenge or encouragement, and explore together how to fulfill those roles and meet those responsibilities in the light of that saving word.

Catechetical opportunities that are this practical can be very inviting for adults, who truly wish to live their lives well and responsibly. "When it comes to learning and attendance at

educational programs, adults are primarily motivated by needs stemming from their life tasks (e.g., as family provider, as parent, as seeker of personal growth, as professional, as child of aging parents, as member of the world community). Such opportunities would include preparation for marriage or the Baptism of their children. These challenges or tasks are also key means by which the learner hears God's voice. For this reason, adult religious education should be life-centered" (SLF, #117).

#### **(9) ADULT CATECHESIS IS LIFELONG.**

At no stage of life do we complete our religious formation, attain perfection in our knowledge and practice of the faith, or outgrow our need or capacity for further maturing as disciples. Indeed, as we grow older we need to pray and strive for the gift of perseverance in faith: "To live, grow and persevere in the faith until the end we must nourish it with the word of God" (CCC, #162), ask through prayer for its strengthening, and exercise it through love (cf. *Gal* 5:6). Good adult catechetical ministry helps us tap all these sources and methods for persevering in the pathways of faith. This is why we can affirm that "*Adult religious education is a lifelong process. As long as one is a disciple of Jesus, one will need to continue learning in the faith*" (SLF, #133).

#### **(10) FINALLY, THE MOST FUNDAMENTAL REASONS FOR OUR EFFORTS IN ADULT CATECHESIS ARE TO PRAISE THE GLORY OF GOD, TO PARTICIPATE IN BUILDING THE KINGDOM, AND TO PROMOTE THE GOOD OF THE CHURCH (cf. ACCC, #24)**

Good adult catechesis brings us to realize the goodness and glory of God and to respond with praise and thanksgiving in our prayer and in our lives.

Good adult catechesis equips us to play our part in bringing the light, strength and peace of God's love to the persons and situations we encounter, and in this way to help to build up God's kingdom of truth and life, holiness and grace, justice, love and peace (cf. *GS*, #39)

Good adult catechesis leads us to promote the good of the Church—the People of God, the Body of Christ, our family in faith—so that we may more faithfully reflect the message of Jesus and serve his mission of proclaiming the kingdom, leavening the world with God's love and grace, and calling all people to the joy of faith and the blessings of salvation.

## DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF ADULTS

### TO BE AN ADULT

What does it mean to be an adult, and to live one's life with an adult faith? The bishops at Vatican II observed that:

the advance of age brings with it better self-knowledge, thus enabling each person to evaluate more accurately the talents with which God has enriched each soul and to exercise more effectively those charismatic gifts which the Holy Spirit has bestowed on all for the good of others (AA, #30, as cited in CG).

As adults, we come to know ourselves better, and in this way we can come to see more clearly the gifts and talents we have received from God and/or developed through education or experience—gifts and talents to be used with genuine Christian maturity, in service to God through service to others.

Often this maturity is fostered through "the ordinary dynamics of life—caring for a family, job responsibilities, exercising the duties of citizenship" (CGTM, p. 20). Most frequently, God's call does not take us away from the life we have been living but rather bids us be God's servant and the minister of God's love in the midst of those life circumstances. This is what the universal call to holiness means:

Accordingly all Christians, in the conditions, duties and circumstances of their life and through all these, will sanctify themselves more and more if they receive all things with faith from the hand of the heavenly Father and cooperate with the divine will, thus showing forth in that temporal service the love with which God has loved the world (LG, #41).

In looking, however, at contemporary society, our American bishops have identified several "attitudes and behaviors that signal new levels of maturity needed among Catholic lay men and women in the third millennium" (CGTM, p. 20). These attitudes and behaviors offer areas of particular challenge for our growth in Christian maturity today.

- ***Caring for children***

"Mature persons actively care for future generations.... The Church's social teaching regarding the common good suggests the need for all adults to become conscious of their responsibilities for the young people who are part of their worlds, especially the disabled and the unborn who are among the most vulnerable" (*CGTM*, p. 20).

• ***Religious and theological education***

"In the last fifteen years many of the lay faithful have moved beyond the learning laboratories of ordinary life to more systematic education in theology, Scripture, spiritual life, religious studies, and spiritual direction.... The Church needs a well-educated, inquiring, and vocal laity if the new evangelization is to achieve its full potential" (*CGTM*, p. 21).

• ***Respect for differences***

"Another sign of Christian maturity is respect for differences. This respect, rooted in humility, understands that unity does not require uniformity. The Catholic tradition welcomes diversity as an enrichment, not a threat" (*CGTM*, p. 22).

• ***Participation***

"We consider participation in church life at all levels a gift of the Holy Spirit, given for the common good.... We call on pastoral leaders to strengthen the structures of participation in church life, so that we might listen to one another, grow in understanding, and deepen our experience of dialogue" (*CGTM*, pp. 22-23).

• ***Living with mystery***

"An embrace of the paschal mystery frees the Christian disciple to live fully despite ambiguity or turmoil.... When we embrace our lives, with all their unresolved, mysterious ways, then we are led into the divine embrace of the Mystery that lies at the heart of life" (*CGTM*, p. 24).

Our catechetical ministry with adults is called to serve the growth of such "attitudes and behaviors" as these among the laity with whom we share the life of faith.

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| <b>STAGES OF ADULTHOOD</b> |
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The maturity that comes with adulthood is not something to be assumed or taken for granted. Though we may be considered legally adult at age 18 or 21, we do not thereby become truly, personally mature. This is certainly true of maturity in faith: it is more than an accumulation of years, it is a response to a call from God. "To become an adult and to live as an adult is a vocation given by God to human beings" (*ACCC*, #10).

We respond to this vocation in different ways over the course of a lifetime. Adulthood is not a simple plateau but a changing dynamic through time. Sometimes as adults we experience periods of relative stability in our circumstances; the challenge of these periods is to deepen our faith and use our stability as a foundation for self-giving love of others rather than for self-serving opportunism. At other times in life we experience periods of notable change or even drastic upheaval, in our physical, emotional, moral or spiritual conditions; the challenge then is to keep

our bearings as we take the risk of growth, putting our trust in God who is ever with us and who offers us a new call in the cross or the blessing of our changing circumstances.

The U.S. Bishops have noted this dynamic of the development of faith. As they have said,

Because people are capable of continual development, so are their relationships with God. Essentially, development in faith is the process by which one's relationship with the Father becomes more like Jesus' (cf. *Jn* 14, 6f.): it means becoming more Christlike. This is not just a matter of subjective, psychological change, but involves establishing and nurturing a real relationship to Jesus and the Father in the Holy Spirit, through a vigorous sacramental life, prayer, study, and serving others (*NCD*, #173).

Explanations of the stages of human development based on biological, social, psychological and behavioral sciences, which are critically and carefully evaluated in the light of faith and faith's understanding of the nature of the human person and the relationship of God and humanity, can help catechetical planners understand how adults grow in their readiness and capacity for responding in faith to God's grace (cf. *NCD*, #175).

For the purposes of these guidelines, we will speak in general terms about broad stages of adulthood. In actual practice, however, the adults we encounter are richly diverse, each one unique, constantly forcing us to expand our categories and definitions to accommodate reality. We quickly learn in practice that "[a]ttempting to define adulthood in an univocal way is quite complex," and that it would be more prudent and true-to-life to acknowledge that there are many factors to be considered and "very diverse ways of speaking about and being an adult" (*ACCC*, #31).

The descriptions that follow, then, should be taken for what they are: simple categories and characterizations. They will be of help in our general approach in pastoral ministry. But when the persons whom we encounter in our ministry do not match these descriptions, do not force the person to fit the ministry you have designed based on these characterizations; rather, minister to the person, and then adjust or expand your understanding and your ministry based on your new experience.

We will divide the developmental stages of adulthood roughly into early adulthood, middle adulthood, and later adulthood. Note also that one can distinguish two aspects to each stage or "period" of adulthood: (a) life-cycle or life-stage tasks, which are basically the same for people of any generation, and (b) the unique characteristics and shared experiences of each particular generation, such as Generation X, baby boomers, those who grew up during the Great Depression, etc.

## **YOUNG ADULTHOOD**

Young adulthood "refers to people in their late teens, twenties, and thirties." (*SDL*, p.#7) While there is no precise point of transition from adolescence to young adulthood, a key moment may be when the adolescent leaves home for college, work or military service—usually the later teen-aged years.

The characteristics and circumstances of people at different periods of this age range vary considerably; in other words, young adulthood itself is a diverse, multi-phased period. "Young adults may be single, married with children, unmarried with children, married without children, separated, divorced, or widowed. Some are physically handicapped, emotionally disturbed, or mentally retarded." (*NCD*, #182). "They come from diverse cultural, ethnic, educational, vocational, social, political, and spiritual realities" (*SDL*, p.#7).

Today's young adults have been formed not only by music and television but by a rapid pace of change, continual transformations in technology and communications, environmental awareness, a sense of financial uncertainty amid rising disparity between rich and poor, an increasingly multicultural, mobile and violent society—and by the impact of the social transformations of their parents' generation (e.g., increasing divorce rate, moral relativism, etc.).

Across the diversity of cultures and circumstances, among the developmental tasks young adults face are these: developing personal identity in their new and changing circumstances; developing a wide range of relationships (making friends and developing intimacy, cultivating multicultural relationships, reordering relationships within the family of origin, integrating sexuality into life, choosing marriage or single life); developing a meaning of work (through choosing a career, volunteering, discerning a vocation); and developing a spiritual life that gives hope and conveys meaning as they question, search, and face life's challenges. [Cf. *SDL*, Part One, The Young Adult (pp. 7-15)]

"Obviously, no single catechetical approach will suffice for all" young adults (*NCD*, #182), but through diverse forms of outreach, "Catechesis seeks to help people make the crucial decisions of this period in accord with God's will. It invites young adults to commit themselves to the living of full Christian lives and to engage in ministry within and for the Church community" (*NCD*, #183). In order to relate with today's young adults, catechetical ministers will foster a spirit and practice of mutual dialogue "that welcomes challenges from young adults and from the Church to the young adult, so that each may grow in discipleship" (*SDL*, p. 13).

In their pastoral plan for young adult ministry, the U.S. bishops propose four goals and three objectives for each goal, with catechesis playing an important part throughout. Several objectives are explicitly catechetical; rather than repeat them here at length with their specific strategies, we ask you to refer to the appropriate sections of *Sons and Daughters of the Light*. Although other objectives pertain to catechesis as well, pay particular attention to the objectives on: "Religious Education and Formation" (pp. 29-33), "Forming a Christian Conscience" (p. 36), "Educating and Working for Justice" (pp. 36-37), "Developing Leaders for the Present and the Future" (p. 37), and "Developing Peer Leadership" (p. 41).

Young adulthood is a diverse, exciting and challenging period of life, which is only beginning to receive the pastoral attention it well deserves and for too long has lacked. Our efforts in catechetical ministry with young adults should seek to share with them in the journey of faith during this time in their lives, and help them face their challenges and opportunities with the guidance of an enlightened faith and the support of the community of faith. In this way the work

of our ministry with them and the welcoming of their gifts in our midst will mutually enrich the whole Church.

## MIDDLE ADULTHOOD

Middle adulthood brings its own lifecycle invitations and challenges. Through the years, one's young adult visions and hopes may have become realized, modified, dimmed, or abandoned.

Some people enter middle adulthood with a real sense of coming into their own, and "with optimism and enthusiasm. Ideals are dominant. High goals are set. Ambition is strong. Challenges are eagerly accepted. Self-confidence is undimmed" (*NCD*, #184). These middle years of adulthood may bring a measure of "success" in life. Some who achieve such success may find further fulfillment in developing and using their gifts for others; grateful for life's bounty they seek to make a return to God, becoming more sensitive to the needs of others and seeking ways to share their gifts and their blessings. Some, however, may find themselves asking, "Is this all there is?", and feel a certain emptiness in the midst of plenty.

Others may find life's middle years to be a time of diminishment. For them the "crisis of limits" predominates, through struggles with health or finances, in work or in friendships, in their marriage or family life; they find their hopes "dimmed by failure and the experience of personal weakness" (*NCD*, #184).

Whether our circumstances are going well or poorly during these years, all of us may struggle at times with self-doubt, fear of failure, fear of success, or uncertainty about how to balance work and family life or the apparently competing demands of personal financial security versus the concern for social justice and the common good. Anyone in middle adulthood may experience "a kind of spiritual crisis" as they now personally experience "the limitations of being human" (*NCD*, #184)—even if only through the body's first signs of aging and the dawning realization, "I won't live forever; there's only so much time left."

Faith in the middle years of adulthood invites us to face these new situations with honesty and also with a confident trust in God and God's presence to us in and through these very events and circumstances of our lives. Those who choose "acceptance of one's limitations and, thereby, of one's humanity" may discover "a new stage of maturity, which can be a basis for spiritual growth. With grace and the use of Christian wisdom, it is possible to deepen one's relationship with God and other people" (*ibid.*).

When we receive our life with its blessings and even with its limitations as the gift of a loving God, we grow in faith and become able to hand on the gift of love; as we embrace our "responsibility for sharing the gift of self and for accepting others," we find ourselves "sharing in the boundless love of Jesus Christ himself" (*EV*, #76).

## LATER ADULTHOOD

Aging is a natural process with positive and negative aspects. Besides continuing the emphases of adult catechesis, catechesis for the aging seeks to give them physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual support so that they can make fruitful use of leisure time, understand and accept the increasing limitations imposed by age, and grow in faith even as they grow in years (*NCD*, #187).

Persons may experience the transition to later adulthood as, in part, a series of gains: fewer family demands, increased leisure time, opportunity to pursue previously deferred goals and interests, including service to others outside the family. It can be a time of gaining perspective, tolerance, sensitivity and wisdom.

On the other hand, this transition may also be experienced in terms of its losses: of work role, purposeful activity in society and accustomed routine, income, health, friends, and spouse.

As older adults evaluate the meaning and worth of their lives, some may come to a sense of peace, and of a life well spent. Others may experience a sense of irrecoverable loss and failure. Still others may never consciously address these questions squarely.

For all, however, this stage of adult life inevitably involves facing the reality of death. "Because of Christ, Christian death has a positive meaning: 'For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain' [*Phil* 1:21].' 'The saying is sure: if we have died with him, we will also live with him' [2 *Tim* 2:11]" (*CCC*, #1010). Catechesis can help adults of all ages, but especially older adults, see death as "the final opportunity to assent to the divine will and give oneself freely to God" (*NCD*, #186; cf. *EV*, #46, 51).

## CONCLUSION

All adult Christian faithful—young and old, women and men, clergy, lay and religious, healthy and mentally or physically challenged, of whatever cultural or economic condition—are to hear and respond with maturing faith to the Lord's call to holiness, to community, and to mission and ministry in the concrete circumstances of their own particular lives.

As noted before, for each and every one of us, at whatever stage of life, from childhood through all the years of adulthood, our life on earth is "a *sacred reality* entrusted to us, to be preserved with a sense of responsibility and brought to perfection in love and in the gift of ourselves to God and to our brothers and sisters" (*EV*, #2).

Adult catechesis aims to help people, through all the stages and periods of adult life, continually to cultivate the faith and love by which we can make this gift of self and thus "grow to the full maturity of Christ (cf. *Eph* 4, 13)" (*ACCC*, #32).

## ROLE OF THE FAMILY IN ADULT CATECHESIS

What is the role of the family in adult catechesis? If our focus is on how adults (not children) learn the ways of faith through family life, what do we see? How does this happen? Let us consider adults first in their role as parents or caregivers of children, and secondly in terms of their relationships with other adults.

### ADULTS GROW IN FAITH BY CARING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FAMILY

**(1) First, adults grow in faith through their roles as caretakers of children**—as parent, or in other caretaking roles such as grandparent, aunt or uncle, godparent or sponsor, family friend or neighbor. As adults we learn by doing and we learn by teaching, and adults can grow in faith by caring for children and helping them grow in faith. Whatever the configuration of one's family, consider four dimensions to this role for adults.

**(1.a) Exploring the faith dimension of the events of life.** A child's questions may provoke an adult to consider again or more deeply the religious dimension of life: "Why did my grandpa die?" "What's heaven like?" "Why doesn't my big sister go to church anymore?" "What does 'hallowed be thy name' mean?"

When adults seek to respond to such questions and to explain the faith dimension or religious content of the events of family or Church life, they are drawn to reflect again upon their own faith, and to renew their faith and deepen their understanding of what they believe. Fulfilling this catechetical role helps them grow in faith themselves.

**(1.b) Living the faith in daily life.** Another form of family catechetical activity consists in the simple but telling witness of "day-to-day life lived in accordance with the Gospel" (*CT*, #68; cf. *NCD*, #212) at home or in the neighborhood or parish community; in situations of separation or divorce this witness and sharing can take place at those times one is with one's child(ren). What is said here of parents applies principally to them—whether as couples or as single-parents—but it also pertains to other adult relatives or caretakers:

they catechize informally but powerfully by example and instruction. They communicate values and attitudes by showing love for Christ and His Church and for each other, by reverently receiving the Eucharist and living in its spirit, and by fostering justice and love in all their relationships. Their active involvement in the parish, their readiness to seek opportunities to serve others, and their practice of frequent and spontaneous prayer, all make meaningful their professions of belief. Parents nurture faith in their children by showing them the richness and beauty of lived faith (*NCD*, #212).

By conducting family life in this spirit, adults as parents or primary caretakers also make their home "the first school of those social virtues which every society needs" (*GE*, #3; *FC*, #36). These include, for example, a sense of true justice... respect for the personal dignity of each individual... a sense of true love, understood as sincere solicitude and disinterested service with regard to others, especially the poorest and those most in need. The family is the first and fundamental

school of social living: As a community of love, it finds in self-giving the law that guides it and makes it grow (*FC*, #37).

This kind of family life or parental witness becomes a school of Christian faith and virtue, not only for children, but for the other adults who see or share in this kind of family life.

**(1.c) Reinforcing at home the formal catechetical program.** "Parents should frequently be reminded of their obligation to see to it that their children participate in catechetical programs sponsored by the Church" (*NCD*, #212), and when they do so they can implement an important form of catechetical ministry in the home. This ministry takes place when parents seek "to follow and repeat within the setting of family life, the more methodical teaching received elsewhere" (*CT*, #68), namely, in the Catholic school or parish religious education program.

When couples or single parents take part in the school or religious education program's sessions for parents in order to learn about their child's religion curriculum, and when they use the program's parent materials and do the suggested activities at home, they may grow in faith themselves as they also significantly reinforce the learning potential of the formal catechetical program. This happens best through consistent involvement throughout the program year in varied but ordinary ways—for example, as part of the bedtime routine on the day of the catechetical session, or when sharing a meal, or while riding in the car. Parent(s) can ask questions and talk with their child(ren) about the daily or weekly lessons, share very simply their own faith, read Scripture or pray with their children, do and talk about the arts and crafts projects together, or engage in service projects as a family.

In such ways as these adults can reinforce their own faith and that of the children in their lives. "The fact that these truths about the main questions of faith and Christian living are thus repeated within a family setting impregnated with love and respect will often make it possible to influence the children in a decisive way for life" (*CT*, #68)—and not only the children, but the adults as well.

**(1.d) Becoming catechists.** In parishes with a family- or home-based religious education program, parents or other adult caretakers fulfill an additional function, serving in the formal role of catechist for their children. In this situation, the adults will use the parish-provided catechetical program materials, participate in parish or archdiocesan catechist formation workshops, and take steps to earn archdiocesan catechist certification.

Thus, in their role as caregivers of children, adults can grow in faith through serving the many-faceted catechetical potential of life in the family. When they do so, they "themselves profit from the effort that this demands of them, for in a catechetical dialogue of this sort each individual both receives and gives" (*CT*, #68). Adults will also find that children themselves can be witnesses of faith and can teach the adults in their lives, who in turn can learn from children what it means to trust God without reserve and to live the gospel deeply (cf. *EN*, #71; *FC*, #52; *CCC*, #2227).

**ADULTS GROW IN FAITH WITH OTHER ADULTS IN THE FAMILY**

**(2) Second, adults grow in faith through their relationships with other adults in the family.** This can happen in all adult family relationships. Married couples can find in family life opportunities to strengthen their marriage covenant and their relationship as spouses. Consider four dimensions to this role for adults in the domestic church.

**(2.a) Exploring the faith dimension of the events of life.** Adults can grow in faith by speaking with one another about the faith dimension of the events, questions and challenges of family life, whether related to children, work, in-laws, finances, social life, etc. For example, they can pray together, "God, help us raise this child," and in a spirit of prayer and faith discuss the specifics of a particular child's character or needs. They can consciously try together to build a household budget in light of the gospel call to stewardship and the Church's social teaching. They can arrange their calendars to be sure they simply have time together as a family, or to accommodate family forms of service to parish or neighborhood.

**(2.b) Living the faith in daily life.** Adults can grow in faith through the living witness of their own self-giving love and Christian practice in daily life. This love is made real and visible to others in many ways, both great and small—for example, when spouses learn to accept with love an unplanned pregnancy, or do some extra chores unasked; when they read and pray with Scripture together (or on their own), or make room in their home for a foster child or for a teenager from a troubled family; when they forgive one another for daily faults, or become lay foreign missionaries for a year; when they make love on their anniversary as an expression and celebration of their marriage covenant, or when they simply make a point to kiss before going their separate ways each day. In these and countless other ways, living the faith as adults in our family relationships can help us grow in faith and support others in their faith.

**(2.c) Participating in formal catechetical programs.** Adults can grow in faith by engaging, together or individually, in some form of adult religious education—for example, when spouses or adult siblings take part together in a parish small faith community or post-RENEW group, or in a Bible study program, or a parenting skills workshop, or in reading and discussing the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, or when parents or godparents participate in well-planned adult sessions as the children prepare for sacraments.

Faith sharing within family life can also be enriching, as when parents and their adult children gather for brunch or dinner on a Sunday (e.g., at the beach or at the grandparents' home) or holyday (e.g., Christmas or Easter), and compare or share reflections with one another on the lectionary readings and the homilies they heard.

**(2.d) Becoming catechists.** Adults can also grow in faith by becoming catechists for others. In the context of family this may mean, for example, spouses serving together as a sponsor couple for the engaged, or as a leader couple in parish baptism preparation sessions or in a parenting program. In addition to such family-focused catechesis, couples might also decide to serve together as adult initiation (*R.C.I.A.*) sponsors or godparents, or as a host couple or pastoral facilitators of a small faith community. Whatever the role, adults will seek catechetical formation for the role as well as appropriate archdiocesan catechist certification.

Finally, because of the interplay of family, parish and wider community, all adults support family life when they seek to enrich their personal lives and faith by applying insights gained from studying scripture and the Catholic tradition (for example, using the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*), by nurturing a personal relationship with Jesus, by participating in the weekly worship and communal life of their parish, by serving others in the parish and beyond, and by taking action for a more just and peaceful society.

## ROLE OF THE FAITH COMMUNITY IN ADULT CATECHESIS

As noted before, the catechetical task of fostering faith in adulthood is intimately related to "the need to build *adult Christian communities*.... These communities must express a clear faith identity and must be centered on a clear proclamation of the Gospel, a meaningful celebration of the liturgy and a courageous witness in charity" (ACCC, #35). Let us note two important forms of community, which can serve the growth in faith of adults.

### THE PARISH

The parish "is the basic structure within which most Catholics express and experience faith" (NCD, #224), and is the "privileged place" for catechesis (ACCC, #61). In the context of parish, the people of God live out their baptismal calling and mission, supported by the sacraments, ministries and structures of parish life (cf. *The Parish: A People, a Mission, a Structure* [1980]). The quality of Catholic life in the parish—its faith, liturgy, service, and community life—powerfully influence and form all members of the community. Accordingly, parish renewal and adult catechesis deserve the highest priority, so that the parish may fulfill its mission of serving the gospel and nourishing the faith of God's people.

### THE SMALL CHURCH COMMUNITY

In addition to the parish, we must note the growing role of small faith communities.

Internal to the parish, especially if vast and territorially expansive, *small Church communities*, where present, can be a notable help in the formation of Christians, by providing a consciousness and an experience of ecclesial communion and mission which are more extensive and incisive (CL, #61).

The experience of ecclesial *communion* comes when members of small faith communities spend time together, sharing their faith and their life experiences, praying, conversing, and learning together through adult catechesis (either in the context of the small faith community, or through participation in parish adult education ministry). An experience of *mission* comes in the mutual and practical support they give to help one another in living the faith and facing the challenges of daily life, and in the active service to the wider community which members of the

small faith community engage in, whether individually, in pairs or ministry groups, as families, or together as a whole community.

When people come together like this, for prayer, Scripture reading, catechesis, and discussion on human and ecclesial problems with a view to a common commitment... the individual Christian experiences community and therefore senses that he or she is playing an active role and is encouraged to share in the common task. Thus, these communities become a means of evangelization and of the initial proclamation of the Gospel, and a source of new ministries (*RM*, #51).

The individual and the parish community both grow when small faith communities are healthy and vital, connected with the parish, and blessed with the support of parish leaders and members.

### **MOTIVATION FOR ADULT CATECHESIS**

The style and forms of parish life, including small faith community life, not only influence the potential of our adult catechetical ministry, but also affect people's motivation to participate in planned religious education opportunities for adults. This motivation for adult catechesis can occur in a wide variety of ways.

The total learning environment of the parish is...an important factor in motivating adults. This includes the quality of the liturgies, the extent of shared decision making, the priorities in the parish budget, the degree of commitment to social justice, the quality of the other catechetical programs. Programs for adults should confront people's real questions and problems honestly and openly. As far as possible, they should offer positive reinforcements and rewards; the learning environment should be attractive and comfortable; adults should be encouraged to realize their potential for becoming religiously mature—or more mature—persons. Good publicity in the media, religious and secular, is also very helpful (*NCD*, #189).

Finally, we can take both warning and encouragement from the realization that while inferior programming will quickly get a bad reputation, adult catechetical experiences of real substance, relevance and quality will become known for their excellence, and "The best inducement to participate is an excellent program. People are drawn by the testimony of satisfied participants, as well as by personal invitations from friends and Church leaders" (*NCD*, #189). May this serve as encouragement to devote our best efforts to planning and implementing quality adult religious education for adults.

### **THE CATECHIST OF ADULTS**

Certain qualities characterize all good catechists, who apply their faith and catechetical skills in ways best attuned to the particular age, background, culture and condition of the persons whom

they serve. The following are some of these qualities as they apply to those whose ministry is *adult* religious education.

### **ADULT CATECHISTS HAVE AN ADULT FAITH**

Catechists of adults are persons who themselves "have an *adult faith*" (ACCC, #71), acquired and nurtured through their own "personal experience of the faith journey and of the challenges it presents the learner" (SLF, #77). This personal experience gives authenticity to their witness to the light and power of faith to guide us on our way.

Above all, they continually cultivate their relationship with and deepen their commitment to Jesus, so as to fulfill with integrity their catechetical ministry of "proclaiming Jesus Christ in order to lead others to faith in him" (CCC, #425; cf. NCD, #207).

### **ADULT CATECHISTS HAVE AN ECCLESIAL FAITH**

Catechists of adults are living members of the community of faith. In full communion with the Church, they have "learned the meaning of community by experiencing it" (TJD, #23; cf. NCD, #209), and they seek to help others share in that experience.

The faith they endeavor to hand on and to help others seek, accept, more profoundly investigate and more fully live, is the faith of the Church. They wish to say, with Jesus, "My teaching is not my own but is from the one who sent me" (Jn 7:16; cf. CT, #6; CCC, #427); they wish to say, with Paul, "I handed on to you as of first importance what I also received" (1 Cor 15:3). They wish their message to be that of Jesus and his Church. "To insure fidelity to that message, catechists test and validate their understanding and insights in the light of the gospel message as presented by the teaching authority of the Church" (NCD, #208).

They have a love for the Church and "a deep sense of belonging and responsibility" (GC, #7) to the pilgrim people of faith, a community "at once holy and always in need of purification" (LG, #8). They cultivate in themselves and in those among whom they minister that "*ecclesial consciousness*, which is ever mindful of what it means to be members of the Church of Jesus Christ, participants in her mystery of communion and in her dynamism in mission and the apostolate" (ChI, #64).

### **ADULT CATECHISTS ARE PERSON-CENTERED**

Catechists of adults respect and have a personal concern for those among whom they serve. "Adult religious educators regard learners as more than program attendees; they regard them as persons who deserve their respect, trust, and love. Seeking to enter into relationship with them, they assign great importance to their learning needs, interests, and abilities" (SLF, #81).

They make the catechetical environment hospitable and friendly, and help people feel welcome and at ease. They take the time and make the effort "to know the people they serve.... They make themselves available to learners, clearly signaling that they are approachable and truly interested in meeting with them" (SLF, #82). Such kindly interest is simple human courtesy, a duty of Christian charity, and a witness to that availability which characterized the ministry of Jesus.

### **ADULT CATECHISTS ARE SENSITIVE TO CULTURE AND ETHNICITY**

"Here in the United States, the population that makes up our Roman Catholic community is highly diverse ethnically, linguistically, socially, and economically. We are black, white, Hispanic,

Asian, Native American. We are urban and rural, northerners and southerners; most of us were born here, but an increasing number of us were not. Yet, all of us have a need to hear the Gospel proclaimed in a way that speaks to our own hearts" (*SLF*, #83).

Our ethnic and cultural heritage is part of who we are and deserves recognition and respect in the catechetical setting: "Sound catechesis also recognizes the circumstances—cultural, linguistic, etc.—of those being catechized" (*NCD*, #47). This means, for example, that "Language and images must be adapted to the capacity of the learners in accord with their age levels and cultural backgrounds" (*GDSCM*, p. 4). Catechists of adults will, accordingly, make every effort to use language and images, forms of prayer and catechetical examples, most appropriate for the persons and groups whom they serve.

The importance of this factor in effective catechesis "places particular responsibility on adult religious educators to become familiar with the minority segments of the community they serve" (*SLF*, #84).

### **ADULT CATECHISTS ARE KNOWLEDGEABLE**

Catechists of adults know the message of Jesus and the faith of the Church. They know the methods of working with adult learners, and can apply the Church's teaching and adapt their methods in a way that will help adults grow and mature in a living faith. They know the contemporary world of the adults whom they serve and can help learners understand their own experience in the light of the gospel and through the lens of the Church's doctrinal, moral and social teachings. Finally, they have as "an indispensable quality...the wise insight which allows them to go beyond the interpretation of texts to a deep grasp of vital issues and contemporary problems, and to be able to critically interpret present day events and the 'signs of the times'" (*ACCC*, #73).

### **ADULT CATECHISTS ARE SKILLFUL**

Adult catechists not only *know* adult learning methods but have become skilled in *using* them effectively in ministry. They have not only a living faith and a measure of spiritual maturity, but also "a professional competence, or the ability to sustain a catechetical journey with their brothers and sisters" (*ACCC*, #72).

Further catechetical skills for working with adults include "the ability to listen and dialogue, encourage and reassure, form relationships, work in teams, and build community" (*ACCC*, #73).

"The ability to enable others is probably one of the most essential skills that adult religious educators need today, and it is a good criterion for testing the authenticity of one's call to that ministry" (*SLF*, #91).

### **ADULT CATECHISTS ARE REALISTIC**

In many ways, effective adult catechists are realists.

It is our human dignity to be made in God's image and destined for eternal beatitude, gifted with reason, conscience and free will; however, our nature also "bears the wound of original sin," through which we are now "inclined to evil and subject to error" (*CCC*, #1707). Though we wish it were always easy, rather we find we must "struggle to do what is right" (*GS*, #37; *CCC*, #409). The realistic catechist is aware of this wound, and helps people "draw...strength from the Lord" (*Eph* 6:10) to engage in the struggle.

Effective adult religious educators are realistic about how things work in parish life. They "need to understand the Church's organizational system and how they can best work within it to attain their goals" (*SLF*, #98).

"To be an effective adult religious educator, one must be able to live with considerable ambiguity" (*SLF*, #96)—including ambiguity about the results or fruitfulness of one's ministry. Indeed, while dealing with obstacles and difficulties, the realistic adult catechist is willing "to accept even modest success and to exercise utmost *courage and patience* in the face of the failure of even the finest initiatives" (*ACCC*, #85).

The possibility of such failure does not deter adult catechists from initiative and industry. "Adult religious educators must also be willing to accept certain costs and risks as part of their ministry.... [and] be willing to try different approaches, to risk failure and the judgment of the learners if they are to be the kind of disciples their ministry calls for" (*SLF*, #100; cf. *ACCC*, #6 & 17).

However, being realistic does not mean seeing only the negative potential in people or in our ministry; precisely as realists, adult religious educators "are spiritual optimists. They believe in the Church and in the goodness and giftedness of those whom they serve" (*SLF*, #80).

"In a word, the catechist of adults will be a sufficiently balanced human being, with the flexibility to adapt to different circumstances" (*ACCC*, #73).

### **ADULT CATECHISTS ARE *COLLABORATIVE***

Catechists of adult collaborate with their learners as co-learners, for even in their role as catechists, they join with others "In the process of growing in faith, they feel one with and indebted to everyone, and they know how to recognize everyone and make them agents and participants in the faith journey" (*ACCC*, #71).

Catechists of adults also collaborate willingly with other pastoral ministers and ministries in the parish. These ministers may "find themselves from time to time engaging adults as learners. When these instances occur, adult religious educators can lend their support by graciously offering their skills and insights" (*SLF*, #105).

### **ADULT CATECHISTS *INSPIRE OUR INTEREST***

The most effective catechists—whether of children, youth or adults—are, somehow, interesting, and are able to arouse and maintain the interest of the learner in the focus of the learning.

Perhaps through the extent of their grasp of the subject, or the genuineness of their concern for the learner, or their ability to connect faith and life authentically and realistically and witness to it personally, or even through those innocent and engaging "quirks" of behavior that make memorable teachers memorable and may even inspire affection: for any of these or other similar reasons, effective catechists foster that sense of interest, questioning and wonder that can awaken in people a sense of life's mystery, a desire for truth and a love of wisdom. As catechists, they help adults heighten this sense, satisfy this desire and find this love in God, for "The mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is the central mystery of Christian faith and life...the source of all the other mysteries of faith, the light that enlightens them" (*CCC*, #234).

## DESIRED FAITH RESPONSES AND CORRESPONDING CATECHETICAL CONTENT

What knowledge, attitudes and skills do adults need to mature in faith and live the Christian life most authentically and fully? In one sense, there is no limit to the depth of understanding and degree of Christian living which our efforts in adult religious education can hope to help people achieve. This is why we say that

The content of adult catechesis is as comprehensive and diverse as the Church's mission. It should include those universally relevant elements, which are basic to the formation of an intelligent, and active Catholic Christian and also catechesis pertaining to the particular needs which adults identify themselves as having (*NCD* 185.a).

In other words, the parish plan for adult catechesis will both (a) provide a systematic study of the entire Christian message and mission, and (b) address the particular interests or concerns of adults in the parish community. Local planning efforts will attend to both aspects.

The following charts are offered as an aid toward envisioning a well-rounded range of catechetical opportunities for adults. The structure of these charts needs a word of explanation. The U.S. Bishops' National Catechetical Directory identifies four tasks for all catechists: "to proclaim Christ's message, to participate in efforts to develop community, to lead people to worship and prayer, and to motivate them to serve others" (*NCD*, #213). The GDC has added two more tasks – to foster a missionary initiative and moral formation (GDC #83). The International Council for Catechesis' statement identifies three goals for adult catechesis, already stated above: "to acquire an attitude of *conversion to the Lord*," to cultivate "a conscious and firm decision to live the gift and choice of faith through *membership in the Christian community*," and to make one "more willing and able to be a *Christian disciple in the world*" (*ACCC*, #36-38).

On the following pages are eighteen charts, one for each of the six tasks of catechesis for each of the three goals of adult catechesis. Each chart lists the appropriate content for adult catechesis and the corresponding knowledge, attitude, or skill of an adult person of faith.

The point of these charts is that the content of adult religious education is not abstract or arbitrary, but is related to and in service of the broader goals of catechetical ministry and our whole Catholic Christian way of faith and life for adults.

Again, these charts are offered as a point of reference for your own parish planning. Highlight, adapt or develop those items most relevant to your own situation. Attention to each of the charts will help you develop a wide-ranging and well-rounded series of adult religious education opportunities for your local community.

**ADULT CATECHESIS: CONTENT AND SKILLS FOR CHRISTIAN FAITH AND LIFE**

**DESIRED FAITH RESPONSES AND CORRESPONDING CATECHETICAL CONTENT**

**GOAL ONE: TO HELP ADULTS TO ACQUIRE AN ATTITUDE OF CONVERSION TO THE LORD**

**(1) by knowledge of the faith**

**(2) by liturgical life**

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis</i>: the call to holiness and mission; revelation and faith (CCC #237, 851-8756, 2013-2014, 2028, 2029)</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior</i>: adults attend to God's presence and listen for God's call in their lives; they seek to respond with faith, loving and serving God and neighbor</li> <br/> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis</i>: the mystery of the Trinity; the person of Jesus (Christology); the Holy Spirit; God's creation of "first things"; why God has made us and what we are called to (CCC #232-267; 279-301; 340-354)</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior</i>: adults grow in a relationship of trust, reverence and love with God, with Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit</li> <br/> <li>● <i>content of adult catechesis</i>: Scripture and familiarity with the CCC as a point of reference and authentic presentation of the Tradition in the light of which the Scriptures are read. (CCC #78, 80-86, 190, 230-250, 280, 338)</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior</i>: adults treasure God's word in the Scriptures, finding light and guidance for believing and living</li> <br/> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis</i>: the paschal mystery; the spirituality of suffering; God's loving providence and plan of loving goodness (CCC #571-572, 444-445, 164, 1508, 1521, 302, 305-307, 321-323)</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior</i>: adults seek to persevere in faith and grow closer to Christ in their everyday lives, even through suffering and the trials of life</li> <br/> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis</i>: eschatology ("last things") and the transcendent dimension of human life; the communion of saints; God's "plan of loving goodness" (CCC #50, 670-672, 679-682, 1108, 946-948, 953, 960-962)</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior</i>: adults look forward in faith and joy to the fullness of eternal life</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis</i>: the liturgy; the sacramental economy (CCC #1069-1173, 1187-1199 Part 2 Section 2)</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior</i>: adults celebrate the liturgy and sacraments with faith and trust, to praise and adore the Lord and to cultivate their union with Christ</li> <br/> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis</i>: baptism, confirmation, Eucharist (CCC #977-979, 1212-1284, 1285-1312, 1322-1419)</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior</i>: adults grow in fidelity to the sacraments of their Christian initiation, which call them to holiness and a spirit of mission in daily life and exploration of their meaning for daily living</li> </ul> |
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| <b>(3) by moral formation</b>  | <b>(4) by prayer</b>   |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis:</i> centrality of Christ in the moral life (CCC #1693, 1696, 1697)</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior:</i> adults understand how the “first and last point of reference” in moral catechesis “will always be Jesus Christ himself” (CCC #1698) and his new commandment of love (cf. CCC #1970)</li> <br/> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis:</i> personal conversion and morality</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior:</i> adults, with God’s grace, seek to follow Jesus more closely, growing in holiness through renewal of life in accord with his example and teaching</li> <br/> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis:</i> mercy and sin; grace; the virtues</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior:</i> adults recognize and renounce the reality of sin, turn to God in repentance and conversion, and freely rely on the power of God’s grace to grow in virtue and holiness</li> <br/> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis:</i> conscience formation</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior:</i> adults form their conscience by the word of God, prayer, and the Church’s teaching (CCC #2021, 1996, 200-2005, 407-409, 1783-1802, 1730-1748, 2465-2472, 1965-1986, 2055 – applies to whole section)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis:</i> forms and expressions of prayer and spirituality; devotional life; Mary and the cult of the saints (CCC Part 4; #484-511, 273, 773, 829, 964-975, 2030, 946-948, 956, 828)</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior:</i> adults learn and practice the ways of Christian prayer</li> <br/> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis:</i> the Lord’s Prayer (CCC #2607, Part 4 Section 2)</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior:</i> adults learn the meaning and spirit of the Lord’s Prayer and pray it each day</li> </ul> |

**GOAL ONE: TO HELP ADULTS ACQUIRE AN ATTITUDE OF CONVERSION**

| <b>(5) by belonging to community</b>   | <b>(6) by missionary spirit</b>   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis:</i> ecclesial consciousness; love for the Church; the doctrine and the Church – one, holy, catholic, apostolic; the Church as the people of God’s and the Mystical Body of Christ; hierarchical communion (CCC #748-887)</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior:</i> adults value and cultivate their communion with the People of God that flows from their communion with Jesus</li> <br/> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis:</i> role and mission of the parish and of the diocese (CCC #2179, 833); relationship between the local and universal churches</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior:</i> adults participate in the life of the local Church, parish and diocese</li> <br/> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis:</i> identity and role of the Christian family (as community of faith, witness, prayer and evangelization; as school of social virtues; etc.) (CCC #2204-2220, 1882, 2232-2233, 2685)</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior:</i> adults seek to live and share their faith in the families</li> <br/> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis:</i> value of small faith communities (for prayer, learning, reflection)</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior:</i> adults may seek to express and nourish faith and ongoing conversion through sharing the life of a small faith community</li> <br/> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis:</i> ecumenism</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior:</i> adults recognize the search for Christian unity as an essential dimension of Catholic faith and practice (CCC #820-822, 838, 855, 1271)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis:</i> example of Jesus as model of love; gospel discipleship as service; Christian humanism of personalism (human fulfillment through the gift of self in love) (CCC #425, 1816, 852, 2443-2449, 2462, 1965-1986, 20555, 1716-1729, 1820)</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior:</i> adults cultivate their union with Christ through loving and serving others</li> <br/> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis:</i> love of preference for the poor (CCC #852, 2443-2449, 2462, 1965-1986, 2055, 1716-1729, 1820)</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior:</i> adults recognize the presence of Christ in the poor, serve him by acts of charity and works of justice (CCC #1888-1896, 1905-1948, 2402-2463)</li> <br/> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis:</i> world religions (CCC #820-822, 838, 855, 1271, 839-845)</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior:</i> adults respect the positive values expressed in the world’s religions</li> </ul> |

**GOAL TWO: TO HELP ADULTS LIVE THE GIFT AND CHOICE OF FAITH THROUGH MEMBERSHIP IN THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY**

| <b>(1) by knowledge of the faith</b>  | <b>(2) by liturgical life</b>   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis:</i> doctrine on the nature and mission of the Church (CCC #767-887, 1428, 2030-2051)</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior:</i> adults understand the life-giving place and structure of the Church in God's plan of loving goodness, continuing the mission and message of Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit</li> <br/> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis:</i> Catholic identity; "ecclesial consciousness" (Christifideles Laici 64) (CCC #830-848)</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior:</i> adults value and cultivate a sense of identity, belonging and mission as Catholics</li> <br/> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis:</i> the "great themes of the Christian religion", respecting "the hierarchy of truths and their interrelationship" (ACCC #43), (CCC #90, 234, 94)</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior:</i> adults seek to deepen their grasp of Scripture and the Church's creeds, tradition and current teachings, as well as sound and relevant contemporary theology and the Church's rich and developing spiritual heritage</li> <br/> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis:</i> role of laity (within the Church) (CCC #871-873, 900-913)</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior:</i> adults understand and live their role as laity in the Church and in the life and mission of the parish</li> <br/> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis:</i> teaching on ecumenism and world religions (CCC #820-822, 823, 855, 1271, 839-845)</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior:</i> adults understand the integral importance and basic principles of ecumenism and interfaith dialogue</li> <br/> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis:</i> Church history; respect for the different cultures and peoples in the Church</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior:</i> adults have a sense of perspective on the Church – valuing our traditions and heritage, acknowledging our weaknesses and failures, appreciating our diversity and potential</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis:</i> skills for active participation in the liturgy and sacraments appropriate for one's role (CCC #1068-1112, 1113-1134)</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior:</i> adults celebrate the liturgy and sacraments with faith and trust, to praise and adore the Lord and to cultivate their union with one another</li> <br/> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis:</i> liturgy as the "summit" of the Church's life and activity (CCC #1069-1112, 1113-1134)</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior:</i> adults give expression to their faith and life through the communal celebration of the liturgy</li> <br/> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis:</i> marriage; holy orders (CCC #1534-1535)</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior:</i> adults can serve the Christian community through the sacraments of commitment</li> <br/> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis:</i> Eucharist as a sacrament of unity (CCC #1396, 1398-1401, 839-845)</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior:</i> adults grow in love for Christian community through the Eucharist, and experience the pain of Christian divisions as an incentive for renewed ecumenical efforts</li> </ul> |

**GOAL TWO: TO HELP ADULTS LIVE THE GIFT AND CHOICE OF FAITH THROUGH MEMBERSHIP IN THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY**

| <b>(3) by moral formation</b>  | <b>(4) by prayer</b>   |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis:</i> the ten commandments, the beatitudes and the sermon on the mount, the teaching of the apostles (cf. CCC #1724-1729, Part 3 Section 2, 75-77)</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior:</i> adults strive to form their consciences and guide their lives by the resources of the faith community – the light of God’s word and the Church’s moral and social teaching</li> <br/> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis:</i> gospel of life; the dignity of the human person; respect for persons of other cultures, races, religions, etc; respect for life – the Church’s teaching on the right to life, abortion and euthanasia (CCC #1700-1715, 1807, 1928, 1934-1948, 2270-2278, 2318-2330)</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior:</i> adults respect each human being as made in the image of God, creation as the gift of God, and the goods of creation as intended by God to be shared fairly among all people</li> <br/> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis:</i> the family as school of social virtues (CCC #2204-2220, 1882, 2232-2235, 2685)</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior:</i> adults promote family life as a community of faith and virtue for each of its members, promoting Christian love and service within the family and in the wider community</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis:</i> family prayer (CCC #2685, 2694)</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior:</i> adults foster a spirit and practice of prayer in the family</li> <br/> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis:</i> the Liturgy of the Hours (CCC #1174-1179, 1196)</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior:</i> adults learn about and pray some portions of the Church’s daily prayer, the Liturgy of the Hours, and/or forms and practices of prayer modeled on it – especially in the use of the psalms</li> <br/> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis:</i> the tradition of Catholic spirituality and devotional life; popular devotions of various cultures (CCC #2030, 956, 828, 1937)</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior:</i> adults appreciate the different prayer forms that have emerged in diverse periods and cultures during the Church’s history</li> </ul> |

**GOAL TWO: TO HELP ADULTS LIVE THE GIFT AND CHOICE OF FAITH THROUGH MEMBERSHIP IN THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY**

| <b>(5) by belonging to community</b>  | <b>(6) by missionary spirit</b>  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis:</i> participation in and co-responsibility for the life and mission of the parish; skills for participation, collaboration, dialogue discernment, support (CCC #2179, 833)</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior:</i> adults are involved in and contribute to the life and activities of their parish communities</li> <br/> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis:</i> family as domestic Church; Christian parenting (CCC #2204-2220, 2685, 2221-2233, 2197-2203, 1655-1666)</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior:</i> adults cultivate the diverse aspects of Church life and mission in and through their own families</li> <br/> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis:</i> characteristics of authentic small church communities; role of small communities (for mutual support and personal relationships); relation of small communities to family and to larger parish/diocesan Church (CCC #849, 858-859)</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior:</i> adults may participate in small church communities as a positive dimension of Church life</li> <br/> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis:</i> practice of ecumenism and interfaith dialogue (CCC #820-822, 839-845)</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior:</i> adults participate in building ecumenical and interfaith relations</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis:</i> Church as missionary by nature (CCC #767, 898-900)</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior:</i> adults appreciate the essentially missionary nature of the Church</li> <br/> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis:</i> the social mission of the parish</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior:</i> adults strengthen the community of faith by joining together to serve human needs (CCC #2179)</li> <br/> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis:</i> vocations to ordained ministry, to religious life, to church ministry, to lay ministry both professional and volunteer (CCC #1694, 825, 897-913, 914-915, 1536, 1600)</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior:</i> adults serve the community of faith in various ways</li> </ul> |

**GOAL THREE: TO HELP ADULTS LIVE THEIR CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP IN THE WORLD**

| <b>(1) by knowledge of the faith</b>  | <b>(2) by liturgical life</b>  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis:</i> the Church’s teaching on evangelization, and on the “dialogue of salvation” (Paul VI)</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior:</i> adults know that “all disciples of Christ are obligated to spread the faith to the best of their ability” (LG #17) by the witness of life and the witness of word [Lumen Gentium 17, Vatican Council II. <i>The Basic Sixteen Documents</i>, ed. Austin Flannery, O.P. (a completely revised translation in inclusive language) Northport, N.Y.: Costello Publishing Company, 1996]</li> <br/> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis:</i> the Church’s social teaching (CCC #1889-1930, 2400-2643)</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior:</i> adults pay close attention to the Church’s social teaching and the gospel call to love of neighbor</li> <br/> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis:</i> understanding the “secular character” of the role of laity (CCC #928-953, 897-913, 1882, 2207-2213)</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior:</i> adults accept and ponder the implications of their call as laity to witness and service in family and society</li> <br/> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis:</i> dignity of the human person; respect for persons of all cultures, races, religions, etc. (CCC #820-822, 838, 855, 1271, 1700-1715, 1807, 1934-1948)</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior:</i> adults realize and honor the dignity of every person without exception</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis:</i> liturgy as the “source” of the Church’s life and activity (CCC #1071)</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior:</i> adults find strength for loving service in their celebration of the liturgy and sacraments</li> <br/> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis:</i> reconciliation; anointing (CCC #1401, 1420-1470, 1480-1498, 1499-1523)</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior:</i> adults are healed and strengthened for service through the sacraments of healing</li> <br/> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis:</i> Eucharist as a sacrament of love (CCC #1323)</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior:</i> adults celebrate the Eucharist as a sacrament of covenant renewal and commitment to the mission of the Church in the world; through the Eucharist they grow in love of neighbor</li> </ul> |

**GOAL THREE: TO HELP ADULTS LIVE THEIR CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP IN THE WORLD**

| <b>(3) by moral formation</b>   | <b>(4) by prayer</b>  |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis:</i> personal and social morality (CCC #2021, 1996, 1997, 2000-2005)</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior:</i> adults, with God's grace, seek to conduct their daily lives and transform their culture's values in accord with the call of God and the commandment of love</li> <br/> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis:</i> inner conversion and social change (CCC #1888)</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior:</i> adults recognize the need for ongoing personal conversion and its implications for social transformation according to the norms of justice</li> <br/> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis:</i> the gospel of life (CCC #2270-2278, 2318-2330)</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior:</i> adults actively promote respect for human life from conception until natural death</li> <br/> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis:</i> the Church's tradition of a simple lifestyle (CCC #1718-1729)</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior:</i> adults cultivate a simple lifestyle – to imitate Jesus, promote justice, aid the poor, and respect the earth</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis:</i> mutual connection of prayer and service (CCC #2608, 2745)</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior:</i> adults pray for the wisdom to discern God's will in the concrete circumstances of family and social life, and for the ability and courage to follow it</li> <br/> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis:</i> prayer for the world (CCC #2559, 2561, 2629, 2635, 2805, 2828, 2833)</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior:</i> adults pray "without becoming weary" (Lk 18:1) for the needs of people, for the common good, for the welfare of creation</li> </ul> |

**GOAL THREE: TO HELP ADULTS LIVE THEIR CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP IN THE WORLD**

| <b>(5) by belonging to community</b>   | <b>(6) by missionary spirit</b>  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis</i>: skills for collaboration in evangelization and in social justice ministry</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior</i>: adults learn to work together, as members of the parish or lay associations, in witness and service</li> <br/> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis</i>: role of the family (for participating in the life and mission of the Church) (CCC #2204-2220, 1882, 2232-2233, 2685, 2207-2213, 1655-1666, 2197-2233)</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior</i>: adults live their family lives, and teach the younger generation, to participate in the life and the work of the parish and wider Church community</li> <br/> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis</i>: role of small church communities (for involvement in the life of the parish) (CCC #849, 858-859)</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior</i>: adults can deepen their connection with their parish and their involvement in its life through belonging to a small faith community</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis</i>: skills for evangelization</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior</i>: adults engage in action for evangelization, promoting the gospel through deed and word, through witness and sharing</li> <br/> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis</i>: promoting social concern; service of the common good; preferential love for the poor</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior</i>: adults engage in action for justice, with active care and concern for the needs of others, especially the most needy</li> <br/> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis</i>: role of the family (for participating in the development of society)</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior</i>: adults live their family lives, and teach the younger generation, to contribute to the life or society and cultivate a sense of civic responsibility</li> <br/> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis</i>: role of small church communities (for witness and service in apostolic mission)</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior</i>: adults can serve others through and with their small faith communities</li> <br/> <li>● <i>content for adult catechesis</i>: enacting the “secular character” of the role of the laity</li> <li>■ <i>corresponding attitude or behavior</i>: adults live the values of the gospel in the circumstances of daily life: in the world or work, professional life, civil life, politics, economics, education, arts and culture – in all fields of human endeavor</li> </ul> |

## WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Those concerned to offer adult Catholic parishioners an "itinerary" (ACCC, #68) or program for growth in faith that is reasonably "comprehensive and diverse" (NCD, #185) can find guidance in these three tables.

And yet, the "decision as to *which itineraries* are to be taken will depend on the situation in which adults find themselves" (ACCC, #68). For example, our adult catechetical ministry may be focused at times on young adults, or on the aged, or on those in the "middle" years of adulthood; at times, on the individual, or the family, or the small group, or on larger gatherings of parishioners.

What might be a suitable focus for catechetical ministry with adults of these varying ages? Consider the following:

### **For young adults, offer suitable catechetical opportunities:**

- to seek, find, and grow more deeply in relationship with Jesus Christ, who was himself a young adult, and who offers himself to us as our brother and friend, as our teacher and Lord
- to find a welcome place in the community of the Church, to understand the nature and mission of the Church, and to become active in serving that mission
- to question, probe, and explore the reasons, values, practices and cogency of the gospel message and of Catholic Christian faith and life
- to find guidance and support in making major life commitments in the light of faith (e.g., single life or marriage, family, work, priesthood, religious community, etc.)
- to develop a suitable spirituality and ways of prayer
- to reflect upon their gifts and calling, and to choose or renew ways to be of service to others
- for further relevant goals, consult *Sons and Daughters of the Light*

### **For adults in the middle years, offer suitable catechetical opportunities:**

- to explore together how to face, understand and live through their adjustments to life ("crisis of limits")
- to reflect on their major life tasks and commitments (family, work, Church, society) in the light of the good news and the Church's teaching (especially social and moral teaching), and with the support of the community of faith
- to develop a suitable spirituality and ways of prayer
- to reflect upon their gifts and calling, and to choose or renew ways to be of service to others

### **For older adults, offer suitable catechetical opportunities:**

- to adjust to new circumstances (retirement, increase of leisure time, changes in routine or income or place of residence, losses, illness, etc.)
- to come to terms with the worth and meaning of their life as they have lived it
- to develop a suitable spirituality and ways of prayer
- to reflect upon their gifts and calling, and to choose or renew ways to be of service to others
- to grow in supernatural hope, and to prepare for a holy death

## YOUNGER AND OLDER ADOLESCENTS

### INTRODUCTION

Over the last 12-15 years, we have been encouraged by sociologists, developmentalists, psychologists, and those who pay particular attention to fostering faith, to consider adolescence as a developmental period with particular characteristics that find their beginnings in the life of the individual as early as age 10 or 11 and continue into one's early 20's. For the sake of these guidelines, we will use the terms younger and older adolescents to denote 11/12-14/15 year olds and 14/15-18/19 year olds respectively. This delineation is found in *The Challenge of Adolescent Catechesis: Maturing in Faith*. [This document was written in collaboration with the USCC, NCEA, NFCYM, and the then NCCD (now NCCL) and represents a comprehensive national effort to define the aim, content, focuses and principles of adolescent catechesis as it should be implemented in parish and school settings also through a collaborative effort of parish and school personnel.] It finds confirmation in those who make it their aim to study young people (As in the Center for Early Adolescence, formerly out of the University of North Carolina, Search Institute, and writers in the fields of religious education and youth ministry) as well as in catechetical documents. [Including *Sharing the Light of Faith: National Catechetical Directory for Catholics of the United States* (cf. NCD #180, #200) and the *General Catechetical Directory* (cf. GCD #83), and the *General Directory for Catechesis*, 1997] Thus, this section will pay particular attention to adolescents - both younger and older adolescents. The developmental reality of younger and older adolescents is distinct, one from the other, and will receive separate attention in the pages to follow. Still, the aim of catechesis for these two developmental periods is the same and there are consistent guiding principles in approaching the catechesis of both younger and older adolescents.

In the recent letter of the United States Bishops to young people we see the intrinsic value of young people—not only as people on the way to being adults or “the church of tomorrow”—but as themselves today, as “the church of today.”

Dear young people...in you, we see the face of God. You are the young Church of today and our hope for the future. You are a mosaic of life reflecting the diversity of our nation and Church. You are truly a gift, and we praise and thank God for you. You are a special gift to the Church and to the World! (MYPH)

And Pope John Paul II has made clear the value he places on youth through instituting international and national celebrations of World Youth Day and through his many words of encouragement and challenge.

In the young there is, in fact, an immense potential for good and for creative possibility. Whenever I meet them in my travels throughout the world, I wait first of all to hear what they want to tell me about themselves, about their society, about their Church. And I always point out: “What I am going to say to you is not as important as what you are going to say to me. You will not necessarily say it to me in

words: you will say it to me by your presence, by your song, perhaps by your dancing, by your skits, and finally by your enthusiasm.”

We need the enthusiasm of the young. We need their joie de vivre. In it is reflected something of the original joy God had in creating.... (John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.: New York, 1994, pp. 124-125)

And his understanding of this unique period is punctuated by his desire that young people come to know Christ in an even deeper way than they were able to as children.

In this search, they cannot help but encounter the Church. And the Church cannot help but encounter the young. The only necessity is that the Church have a profound understanding of what it means to be young, of the importance that youth has for every person. It is also necessary that the young know the Church, that they perceive Christ in the Church, Christ who walks through the centuries alongside each generation, alongside every person. He walks alongside each person as a friend. (*Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, pp. 125-126)

It has increasingly been a concern that we, as church community, learn to more effectively convey the riches of our Catholic Christian faith to young people who are involved in the process of coming to increasing levels of self awareness and self determination. The Church must know the young, as Pope John Paul II so well put it, and the young must know the Church and in the Church find Christ who accompanies them. This journeying with the young is a guiding paradigm for youth ministry best captured in the gospel account of the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35). (VYM, p.5 - The Emmaus account is set forth as the scriptural model for youth ministry) Youth ministry, like Jesus' presence with the disciples on the road to Emmaus,

...begins with a presence to the young which engenders the confidence and hope to ask questions...By drawing out of the youth reflections on the action of God in the events of his or her own life, this sharing enables the young person to begin formulating answers in the light of witnessed tradition and gospel values.(VYM, p.5)

As we investigate appropriate curriculum for younger and older adolescents, we must remember that adolescent catechesis is most effective within a context of total youth ministry (cf. *NCD*, #228). Both the insights of documents and experience tell us that the art of effective adolescent catechesis is best expressed when the community knows its own story - knows Jesus - and can speak its story and its savior in a language that young people can understand. For catechesis “includes both the message presented and the way it is presented.” (*NCD* #5) There is no doubt that Jesus is the primary message, and the life of the community, of the family, of the catechist/religion teacher/youth minister and the community's worship, rituals, and life in the world constitute the major ways in which the Good News is presented to the young.

**KNOWING YOUNG PEOPLE SO AS TO COMMUNICATE THE GOOD NEWS**

There is a wonderful story told by Wayne Rice (Rice, Wayne. *Junior High Ministry*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Youth Specialties, Inc., 1987, p. 50) that speaks of a young adolescent who received an archery set for his birthday. The day after his birthday, his father walked out the front door of his home to see his son shooting arrows at the side of the barn. Coming carefully around the other side of the barn he saw that there were arrows in the center of the targets. Knowing that his son had not used an archery set before, he approached him and said, "Son, you did a great job. But how did you do it? It's really impressive." And his young adolescent son said, "Dad, it was really easy. I shot the arrows and then painted the target around them."

There are times when the Good News is told, when programs are run, when activities are planned for young people and they do not respond. Perhaps we shoot the arrows of positive messages, of Scripture accounts, of traditions lovingly retold...but we do not shoot where they are. We assume that if we tell the story they must respond. And yet we are not really speaking to them. We do not even know who they are or where they are. Certainly our God has been the best model in being attentive to this in sharing the Good News. To speak to us God became one with us in Jesus - "God has visited his people" (CCC, #442) and the "Word became flesh so that thus we might know God's love" (CCC, #458).

Catechesis, therefore, should convey the word of God, as it is presented by the Church, in the language of the men to whom it is directed. (cf. *DV*, #13), (*GCD*, #32).

To be effective sharers of the Good News, we must know the young people with whom we are speaking. We must "visit" them where they live and speak the word in a language that they can understand. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* points out, quoting the Roman Catechism:

Above all, teachers must not imagine that a single kind of soul has been entrusted to them, and that consequently it is lawful to teach and form equally all the faithful in true piety with one and the same method! ...Those who are called to the ministry of preaching must suit their words to the maturity and understanding of their hearers, as they hand on the teaching of the mysteries of faith and the rules of moral conduct. (CCC, #24)

Although the message of the Good News is in some ways very simple:

The whole concern of doctrine and its teaching must be directed to the love that never ends. Whether something is proposed for belief, for hope or for action, the love of our Lord must always be made accessible, so that anyone can see that all the works of perfect Christian virtue spring from love and have no other objective than to arrive at love. (CCC, #25)

Still, this means of conveying that message must suit the hearer. "Catechetical materials are adapted to the stages of intellectual, spiritual, emotional and physical development"

(NCD, #181). So let us investigate the context of the adolescent with whom the community of faith wishes to in a most effective manner share the Good News anew.

### **DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS AND CHARACTERISTICS**

The teenage years represent the critical period of transit from childhood to adulthood, during which physical, psychological and social growth is more concentrated than at any comparable time span in life. Since the development of faith is tied directly to the interpretation of meaning in one's life and experiences, the teenage years are an important juncture for the individual's spiritual development. The youth begins to forge a personal sense of meaning and set of values and becomes capable of a deeper personal relationship with Christ and responsible Christian action. (VYM, p. 8)

All human beings experience change during adolescence. This change can be exciting if it awakens a deeper sense of self-identity, leads to the expansion of authentic freedom, enhances our ability to relate to others, and promotes greater maturity. However, the changes of adolescence can also be depressing, alienating, and filled with self-doubt and anxiety. Precisely because of the many divergent possibilities, the time of adolescence is a unique opportunity for the Catholic Christian community to affirm, support, and challenge young people to grow as persons and believers. (CAC, p.3)

It is not news to adults in today's world that the adolescent years in an individual's development are crucial. If an adult's own life experience is not sufficient to bear this out, there are voluminous amounts of studies, ongoing research, easily accessed information, and even a plethora of institutions and companies who prey on adults/parents concerns about the healthy development of the teens they care about---and who may even make a business out of it. Accurate information is key so that those who wish to assist young people in their growth as persons and as persons of faith can know best what issues and needs they are addressing.

### **...AND THE YOUNGER ADOLESCENT**

The young adolescent is in definite flux. Explosions of growth in every possible area of life are normal. There is little stability, little that the early adolescent can call consistent.

Early adolescents will experience a rate of physical growth, second only to infancy, during this stage of life. This time, however, they will live through it self-conscious and self-aware! In addition, their growth may be "crooked", with different aspects of their development happening at different speeds. Early adolescents may be beginning to stretch cognitively as well, varying between black and white concrete thinking and the very beginnings of abstract thought. They are often engaged in cognitive aerobics as they explore and exercise new paths of thoughts asking questions by making statements ("I don't want to go to Mass" rather than

“Why do we go to Mass?”), exploring double entendre and puns and plays on words or images. They alternate between a concrete worldview and the suspicion that there is another way to see, which they can only glimpse now and then and cannot hold onto.

The early adolescent’s need for connection, affiliation, and identity is strongly expressed in the “whom do I belong to?” search. Peers become more than the collection of best friends that an elementary child may have. They are a group in which they find security in conformity, even when everything about them seems to be frustratingly distinct...the early adolescent finds it extremely painful to be different when developmentally they cannot be otherwise. They need to be “normal” and like everyone else, even when there is no such thing as “normal.”

This poignant description Annie Dillard gives of her own early adolescence well describes the flutter of emotions - conscious or unconscious - that accompanies the piecemeal awakening process, which is early adolescence.

I woke in bits, like all children, piecemeal over the years. I discovered myself and the world, and forgot them, and discovered them again. I woke at intervals until...the intervals of waking tipped the scales, and I was more often awake than not. I noticed this process of waking, and predicted with terrifying logic that one of these years not far away I would be awake continuously and never slip back, and never be free of myself again. (Dillard, Annie. *An American Childhood*, New York: Harper and Row Publisher, 1987, p. 11)

The high energy, the exhaustion, the finding themselves present and in their own way, the sense of being looked at by everyone and the need to get attention -- their own and others -- on anything and anyone but them, the deep loyalties, the utter embarrassment, these are part of the emotional interplay the early adolescent wakes to. No wonder early adolescents are confusing and somewhat scary to many adults. They are at least doubly so to themselves! (Cahoon, Joanne M. “Prayer and the Early Adolescent”, found in *Access Guide to Youth Ministry: Early Adolescent Ministry*, New Rochelle, New York: Salesian Society Inc., Don Bosco Multimedia, 1991, pp. 197-198)

In the midst of so much change and simultaneous increase in awareness, the young adolescent finds him or herself in particular need of belonging to communities where support, identification, belonging and affiliation can happen. The Church has an opportunity at this time in an individual’s life, perhaps not exceeded at any other time, to provide a needed safety and a place where the individual can learn about relationships and develop friendships with peers that can provide much needed support.

**...AND THE OLDER ADOLESCENT**

Older adolescents move from the explosions of rapid change to the need to be a unique individual and to find one's own way in life. The need of the young adolescent to be like everyone else and not to stand out is superseded by the desire for personal expression. Forming and expressing a personal identity is key, and movement away from what may be the expressed norm by those in authority in family, church, school, neighborhood, or civic community is typical.

In order to attain the autonomy, which he very much desires, the adolescent often exaggerates his self-expression and at times finds fault with the pattern of life which he has received from adults. (*GCD*, #86)

Older adolescents tend to begin to stabilize in the area of physical development. The onrushes of puberty have passed, but the body that has been left in its wake is still being adjusted to. Making a personal statement in all areas of life is of importance and may express itself in unique expressions in hair, make-up, clothing, or bearing.

Relationships are less harbors of safety in the midst of the seemingly unending changes of younger adolescence. The older adolescent seeks instead a better understanding of self in relationships with others. Although friendships/relationships are frequently at the service of this exploration of the self, the sharing of secrets, of dreams, of experiences, hurts, and joys provide the ground for initial experiences of true intimacy.

The increasing ability to abstract enables the older adolescent to better project into his or her own personal future. There is a looking towards lifestyle and lifework in a more concrete way than was possible previously. The increased cognitive ability also contributes to the possibility of idealism and commitments to justice. There may also be a more sobering realization of limitations the individual faces. The U.S. Bishops, speaking to youth, recognize this aspect of development:

The teenage years present many challenges -- you know this well. At times you can feel pressure from parents and school to be perfect athlete, the perfect student, the perfect son or daughter, the perfect musician. Some of you feel the pressure from peers to wear the right clothes, buy the right things, or join the right group. Others face challenges such as alcohol, drugs, loneliness, despair, or physical/sexual abuse. Racism and prejudice can close the door and harden the hearts of many. Poverty and inadequate education can dim the light of your future...(*MYPH*).

As older adolescents begin to identify for themselves personal philosophies of life and make choices for their future, there is a similar examination of faith that takes place. Again, the bishops speak:

We also realize that adolescence is a time for examining your moral and religious beliefs and for the reaffirmation of your baptismal commitment. Many of you have grown stronger in faith through this searching, while some of you continue to grapple with your faith...(*MYPH*).

And the General Catechetical Directory clearly expresses this understanding of the older adolescent:

Adults must realize that adolescents hold fast to the faith and strengthen themselves in it, not because of any identification with adults, but because of their own convictions as these are gradually explored. (CAC, p.6)

### THE AIM OF ADOLESCENT CATECHESIS

Once there is a basic understanding of who younger and older adolescents are it is appropriate to ask what is our aim in the catechesis of adolescents. The collaborative bodies of NCEA, USCC, NCDD, and NFCYM have defined that aim with one voice that echoes clearly from our tradition.

**The primary aim of adolescent catechesis is to sponsor youth toward maturity in Catholic Christian faith as a living reality.** We adults guide, challenge, affirm, and encourage youth in their journey toward maturity in faith. We have two tasks: to foster in youth a communal identity as Catholic Christians and to help them develop their own personal faith identity. To accomplish the first task, we present the faith convictions and values of the Catholic Christian tradition and invite adolescents to adopt and own these values and convictions. To effect the second, we help adolescents respond to God in faith, in prayer, in values, and in behavior. The sense of belonging experienced by youth in an active Christian community supports these two tasks of adolescent catechesis. (CAC, p.8)

### CATECHIST/ CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RELIGION TEACHER

It should be obvious in this treatment that addressing the issue of the catechesis of adolescents is far more than a matter of selecting a text, turning a page, and following a facilitator's or teacher's guide. The effective conveyance of the Good News is more an art than a science. In its essence, it requires the witness of a community of faith alive in expressing its own response to the call of God. If a young person is bored with the Good News, it is to be feared that they have never encountered it.

Young people are looking for a worthwhile adventure. Joining with Jesus in work on behalf of the reign of God he proclaimed is that adventure. Our challenge is to be a community of believers and disciples that invites, welcomes, loves and involves young people in building up the reign of God. (CCYE, p.6)

The impact of the catechist/religion teacher is directly related to his or her own daily encounter with the Good News of Jesus and his or her own life of conversion, discipleship,

prayer and worship, justice and service. For “the work of the catechist must be considered of greater importance than the selection of texts and other tools.” (cf. AG, #17) (GCD, #71)

*The Challenge of Adolescent Catechesis: Maturing in Faith* has outlined the specific characteristics of those who would share faith with adolescents. (CAC, p. 16)

Catechists/religion teachers are first and foremost **Persons of Faith** with a vibrant personal relationship with Jesus and a well-developed life of prayer. They recognize that they are called to exercise their gifts in catechetical ministry. Catechists/religion teachers are **Witnesses of the Gospel** who believe and live the Good News of Jesus within the Catholic Christian tradition and want to share that faith with others. They witness to the Good News in their life and teaching ministry. Catechists/religion teachers are **Witnesses of the Church**, committed to the Catholic Church and the Church’s teaching mission. They are **Sharers in the Fellowship of the Spirit**, participating in the ongoing communal life of the parish, developing a spirit of community with other catechists, and dealing with conflict and disagreement in a sensitive and understanding manner. Catechists/religion teachers are **Servants of the Community**, responding to the needs of individuals and community. Catechists/religion teachers are **knowledgeable of the Catholic Christian tradition** and have a fundamental understanding of the scriptural, doctrinal, and moral expression of the Catholic faith. In addition, they are committed to continued growth as Catholic Christians and as catechists/religion teachers (cf. NCD, pp. 205-211).

Above and beyond these qualities, catechists/religion teachers possess a genuine love for young people and display qualities that demonstrate this love: **availability, acceptance, authenticity, and vulnerability**. ...Catechists/religion teachers understand the questions, struggles, and concerns of youth and appreciate them for who they are -- persons loved by God. (CAC, p. 16)

“Youth catechesis is most effective within a total youth ministry. Such ministry requires the collaboration of many people with different kinds of experiences.” (NCD, #228) All of those involved in fostering the faith of adolescents in parish or school settings - principals, pastors, religion teachers, catechists, coordinators of youth ministry, religion department chairpersons, directors of religious education, retreat facilitators, community service coordinators, pastoral associates - are engaged in youth ministry. Effective outreach includes not only individuals, but systems and partnerships that are collaborative, open to the Spirit, and witness to the Gospel by their manner of interacting and collaborating for the sake of young people and the reign of God. “It is necessary for the catechist to have a deep faith, a clear Christian and ecclesial identity; as well as a great social sensitivity... Formation, above all else, must help the catechist mature as a person, a believer and as an apostle... It is true that catechists catechize others by first catechizing themselves.” (GDC #237-239)

## ROLE OF THE FAMILY

The adults who have the most influence on the faith development of adolescents are those with whom they live, particularly parents. The parents, therefore as “the first and foremost catechists of their children” (*GE*, #3, *AA*, #11) “catechize informally but powerfully by example and instruction.” (*NCD*, #212)

The family is the heart of both the human community and the faith community.

The family well deserves the beautiful name of “domestic Church.” The family, like the Church, ought to be a place where the Gospel is transmitted and from which the Gospel radiates. In a family, which is conscious of this mission, all the members evangelize and are evangelized (*EN*, #71).

It is in the family where we first come to hear and know the name and mission of Jesus Christ. The family shares in the life and mission of the church by becoming a believing and loving community. Those who witness the love and reconciling nature of Christian families, as well as the spiritual life and the presence of Christ within those families, become the recipients of family evangelization. The family, therefore, reflects the living image of Jesus and transmits the values and traditions of a disciple of Christ. (*CCYE*, pp. 23-24)

A loving family in which the gospel is lived provides a firm foundation for the young person to grow in faith while exploring issues concerning their call to live in accord with the teachings of Jesus. This allows “the maturing adolescent [to be] actively engaged in the life, mission, and work of the Catholic Christian community and in particular [in] his or her own family, the Church of the Home.” (*CAC*, p.8)

In partnership with the family is the larger faith community, especially those who share the responsibility of education. To be effective partners, the formal educators should have an understanding of day-to-day life of adolescents and of families.

The principal task of catechesis in adolescence will be to further a genuine Christian understanding life. It must shed the light of the Christian message on the realities which have greater impact on the adolescent, such as the meaning of bodily existence, love and the family, and standards to be followed in life, work and leisure, justice and peace, and so on (*NCD*, #84).

Effective catechesis is in tune with the life situation of youth -- their language, lifestyles, family realities, culture, and global realities. It identifies the core meanings of the signs, symbols and images of youth today, explores how these surface in youths' lives, and relates them to the signs, symbols, and images of the Catholic Christian tradition. (*CAC*, p.9)

The catechist/religion teacher must have a fundamental knowledge of adolescent development, culture, and a knowledge and appreciation for the influence of the family on the faith development of the young person. Thus, an understanding of the family life cycle, family structure (dual career families, blended families, single parent families, adoptive/foster families, etc.), family systems and the challenges of family life in modern society are necessary if the teacher/catechist is to be effective in working with adolescents as they mature in faith. The role of the catechist/teacher is complimentary to the parents/family and together they support and enhance the faith journey of the maturing adolescent.

The faith community is also responsible to provide for parents' education which will assist them in their role and programs which may give them a better understanding of adolescent development, youth culture, and meaningful expressions of faith for young people. Adults also need to be encouraged to continue their own learning, reflection, and growth in faith, which in turn will assist them in living and sharing the message of Jesus. When the faith community offers support and education to both adolescents and parents, they share with the family the "genuine apostolate" of raising children (*IYF*, #16).

## THE CULTURAL CONTEXT

"The Gospel of Jesus comes to every culture as the in-breaking of the reign of God, with its grace-filled offer of salvation and its promise of renewed life in Christ." (*CCYE*, p.10) In any effort to share the gospel, an awareness of the cultural context of the peoples with whom one speaks must be at the forefront of breaking open the word. "The Church, to whom Christ entrusted the deposit of revelation, strives until the consummation of the world to transmit, explain, and interpret this word in a lively manner for the peoples of every culture..." (*GCD*, #32). With young people, we must clearly show that we know, respect, value, and affirm their cultural heritage. Ethnic culture provides an essential element of an individual and peoples identity and is a rich source for uncovering and celebrating the presence of God.

We live in a Church, which is enriched by the cultural heritages of many people. These cultural heritages have an intimate link with faith...The strong sense of family, tradition, community, celebration, and art/music in these cultures provides building blocks for a catechesis which speaks to the experiences of youth from these cultures. (*CAC*, p. 7)

The evangelization of youth therefore takes place within the diversity of cultural experiences of the church in North America. .... These various expressions of the faith underscore the richness of the Gospel, even while the Gospel critiques the individual cultures. (*CCYE*, p. 10)

The challenge for those in the catechetical programs of youth ministry is to enable young people to apply the Good News to their lived situations and to help them examine the implications of discipleship. To be effective in meeting this

challenge, catechetical programs will utilize culturally appropriate resources and encourage the sharing of faith among young people. (CCYE, p. 19)

In light of this, we urge that culture be factored into the formation processes for adolescents. The National Conference of Catholic Bishops encourage “specific leadership training programs that will provide young people the opportunity to achieve academic, cultural and spiritual growth.” (HIA, p. 11) Specific use of ritual, art, symbol, story, history sharing, dance, celebration of heroes and ancestors, the tracing of a people and their specific spiritualities and charisms – these can be powerful methodology in adolescent catechesis when partnered well with the sharing of the Gospel message.

### **ROLE OF THE PARISH COMMUNITY**

It is not only the catechist/youth minister/religion teacher who provides curriculum to the adolescent. The very life of the parish community evangelizes and catechizes young people. A message is conveyed. Young adolescents seek a community that helps them to feel at home when they are hardly at home with themselves. They seek a place to learn about themselves, to make relationships, to gain skills, to know there is a stable community that cares for them while they are in the midst of great change. They seek a God that understands them better than they can understand themselves and who loves them. Older adolescents ask questions about the community and its beliefs. They want to know why and how and what impact faith has on their life. They seek deeper understanding and need those who would speak knowledgeably. “As they become more intellectually competent, adolescents need more intellectual stimulation and growth.” (NCD, #80) They want to be active in the life, mission and work of the faith community (Cf. Goals of youth ministry in VYM, p. 7) and know they can be leaders and servants themselves. They notice discrepancies between what is said and what is done and look for integrity in groups and institutions they may align themselves with. They seek to establish their own patterns of faith life.

The faith community that would evangelize youth celebrates the Story, tells the Story, is the Story, welcomes and offers hospitality, values young people, invites responsible participation, calls for the involvement of adults, is inclusive, and provides opportunities and a place for youth to gather. (CCYE, pp. 22-23)

It is clear that there must be a planned and systematic partnership between those whose specific role and responsibility is intentionally fostering the faith of young people and the faith community as a whole.

Catechesis must be supported by the witness of the ecclesial community. It speaks more effectively about those things which in fact exist in the community’s external life as well. The catechist is in a certain way the interpreter of the Church among those who are to be instructed.....Hence it is clear how necessary it is that the ecclesial

community, according to the mind of the Church and under the guidance of her bishops, remove or correct things that mar the appearance of the Church and constitute an obstacle for men to embrace the faith (cf. *GS*, #19) Catechists, therefore, have the duty not only to impart catechesis directly, but also to offer their help in making the ecclesial community come alive, so that it will be able to give witness that is authentically Christian. (*GCD*, #35)

This calls for a faith community to honestly embrace conversion in its life of discipleship. Just as a catechist/religion teacher/youth minister must strive for greater integrity to be a more faithful witness to the Gospel in their life as disciples of Jesus, so parish communities must understand their own journey of faith as essential to their potential effectiveness in sharing the Good news with the young.

### **JESUS...TO COME TO KNOW AND TO PROCLAIM**

The person that young people need most to meet in their journey of faith is Jesus of Nazareth. This is true for all catechesis:

“At the heart of catechesis we find, in essence, a Person, the Person of Jesus of Nazareth, the only Son from the Father...who suffered died for us and who now, after rising, is living with us forever.” To catechize is “to reveal in the Person of Christ the whole of God’s eternal design reaching fulfillment in that Person. It is to seek to understand the meaning of Christ’s actions and words and of the signs worked by him.” Catechesis aims at putting “people...in communion...with Jesus Christ; only he can lead us to the love of the Father in the Spirit and make us share in the life of the Holy Trinity.” (*CCC*, #426)

The increased outreach to young people throughout the U.S. through youth ministry and adolescent catechesis efforts needs always to have at its heart this proclamation of the person of Jesus. It is this relationship with Jesus that will best strengthen young people for the challenges they face, and which will guide them through years of change and life impacting decisions.

Our ministry to young people needs to include the explicit verbal proclamation of the Good News. Youth need to literally hear the Good News of Jesus. “There is no true evangelization if the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, are not proclaimed.” (*EN* #22, *CCYE*, p. 11)

As methodologies become more creative, and catechetical materials become more grounded in the language and the culture of youth (as is appropriate...see...above), these cannot replace the proclamation of the person of Jesus. For catechesis is not only the way it is presented, it is the message. (*NCD*, #5) One of the most poignant invitations of the US Bishops

to young people echoes that of Pope John Paul II in the introduction to this section of the guidelines.

God our Father invites you to discover the meaning of life centered in Jesus Christ. This conviction provides a foundation for your life. It gives you values and beliefs that can keep your dreams alive as you face the many challenges of life...

We invite you to know Jesus Christ as a companion and friend, teacher and savior, and to discover what he has to offer as you live your life today. See in Jesus Christ the one God-man whose life gives meaning to the joys and sufferings of millions of people over thousands of years. See in Jesus Christ the One who can help you live your life to the fullest! "I came so that you may have life and have it more abundantly." (JN 10:10)(*MYPH*, 1995)

This should remind all engaged in adolescent catechesis that we are but servants of a work we know only part of...and that both we and the young people we share with are disciples of the same Jesus. To teach Jesus is never to go wrong.

Whatever be the level of his responsibility in the Church, every catechist must constantly endeavor to transmit by his teaching and behavior the teaching and life of Jesus. (*CT*, #6)

Young people who come to know Jesus as companion and friend are the best evangelizers of their peers.

Young people who are well trained in faith and prayer must become more and more the apostles of youth. The Church counts greatly on their contribution, and we ourselves have often manifested our full confidence in them. (*EN*, #72)

Pope John Paul II counts on them too to proclaim that which they have received.

Do not be afraid to go out on the streets and into public places, like the first Apostles who preached Christ and the Good News of salvation in the squares of cities, towns and villages. This is no time to be ashamed of the Gospel. It is the time to preach it from the rooftops.... (John Paul II, Excerpt from homily at World Youth Day in Denver, Colorado, August 1993)

Young people then, are invited to come to know Jesus and, in knowing him, to let their hearts be moved by that which moves his heart. They, with the entire Catholic Christian community, are called to be disciples of Jesus who work for justice, who preach the Gospel, who wash feet, who love enemies, who live life abundant at home, work, and school.

## SIX TASKS OF CATECHESIS

The Curriculum Guidelines is rooted in the 6 tasks of catechesis, as listed by *The General Directory for Catechesis*:

1. Promoting knowledge of the faith
2. Liturgical education
3. Moral formation
4. Teaching to pray
5. Education for community life
6. Missionary initiation

These tasks are reflected in the following framework.

## A FRAMEWORK FOR ADOLESCENT CATECHESIS

When *The Challenge of Adolescent Catechesis: Maturing in Faith* was published, its authors from the various youth serving national agencies and the USCC took seriously their charge to identify appropriate faith themes to be handled with adolescents - both younger and older - in order to provide a systematic, orderly and focused presentation of the Catholic Christian tradition. Seven faith themes were identified as appropriate for younger adolescents and nine for older adolescents. In addition there were to be six dimensions woven through each faith theme treated. Recent catechetical materials for adolescents have taken seriously the charge of this document and addressed the identified faith themes.

Given that an individual Catholic Christian will be continually engaged in the process of better understanding and integrating one's faith, *The Challenge of Adolescent Catechesis* took on the task of identifying what specific aspects of the Good News are particularly appropriate for focus given the developmental reality of young people, their readiness, their questions, and preparing them for life as an adult disciple of Jesus.

Reprinted here is Chapter #4 of the document *The Challenge of Adolescent Catechesis: Maturing in Faith*. (CAC, pp. 12-15) Note that with each faith theme identified, there have been added correlating sections from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

By focusing on key faith themes, adolescent catechesis provides a systematic, orderly, and focused presentation of the Catholic Christian tradition. Six integral dimensions are woven throughout each of these themes.

**Jesus Christ** - Every faith theme includes a discussion of its relationship to Jesus and the Gospel. Thus the adolescent develops an understanding of Jesus and his message and is invited to a personal response in faith to both.

**Scripture** - The catechesis for each faith theme is grounded in Scripture. This fosters in adolescents a deepening knowledge and appreciation of the Scriptures in Church's tradition and in their own lives.

**Church** - Each faith theme affirms the vision of the Church as a historical community of people committed to the vision, values, and mission of Jesus. In seeking to create experiences of such a community, ministers establish this Church in the minds and hearts of the young people.

**Prayer** - Each faith theme leads to and flows from prayer. Adolescents learn to pray by personally and communally experiencing prayer.

**Action/Lifestyle** - Each faith theme leads to action that reflects a Christian lifestyle. This empowers young people to live a more faithful Christian life -- personally, interpersonally, and socially/politically.

**Interpretation and Critical Reflection** - Each faith theme seeks to promote critical reflection and interpretation that affirms and critiques the values and behaviors of culture and society. This enables young people to interpret their own culture, ethnic culture, society, and life experience in the light of the Catholic Christian faith.

This framework presents faith themes designed in light of the learning needs of younger adolescents and older adolescents. The framework, which can be used as the basis for developing the scope, sequence, and objectives of a curriculum, is not intended to serve all the needs of a given situation. Local leaders need to adapt the framework to the particular needs of their youth, and they may also need to include additional faith themes not presented in this paper.

The suggested content for the faith themes is drawn from the Catholic Christian tradition and the developmental, sociological, and cultural research on youth. The selection of each faith theme is designed to "shed the light of the Christian message on the realities which have greater impact on the adolescent." (*GCD #84*) The catechetical focus for each faith theme is in keeping with the developmental and social readiness of the adolescent. Themes that occur for both younger and older adolescents are given new perspectives in light of the adolescent's experience.

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|---|
| <b>FAITH THEMES FOR YOUNGER ADOLESCENTS</b> |
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**Church** (see *CCC #36, 551-553, 748-972*)

Focus: This faith theme helps younger adolescents understand and experience the Catholic Christian story and mission and become involved in the Christian community.

Suggested Content:

- the story of the Church as related to the younger adolescent's story;
- Jesus' mission and ministry as these continue today through the Christian community's ministries of Word, worship, community building, and service;
- the global and multicultural reality of the Church;
- the community life and ministries in the other major Christian churches; (see CCC, #2791)
- involvement in the life, mission, and work of the parish community and family.

**Jesus and the Gospel Message** (see CCC, #422-682)

Focus: This faith theme helps younger adolescents follow Jesus, develop a more personal relationship with Him, concentrate on the person and teaching of Jesus, discover what a relationship with Jesus means, and respond to Jesus from a growing inner sense of self.

Suggested Content:

- Christian faith as a personal response to and relationship with Jesus
- Gospel discipleship or the exploring of what following Jesus and living the Good News means;
- the person of Jesus - his values, intentions, motives, and attitudes;
- the key themes of the Good News (what Jesus teaches us about God, prayer, justice/peace, service, and moral life);
- the impact of the Good News on the adolescent's life;
- the response of the first disciples to Jesus and the Good News.

**Morality and Moral Decision Making** (see CCC, #1776-1789)

Focus: This faith theme helps younger adolescents apply Catholic Christian moral values as maturing persons who are becoming increasingly capable of using decision-making skills to make free and responsible choices.

Suggested Content:

- Jesus' vision of being fully human as the foundation of Catholic Christian morality; (see CCC, #1691)
- the moral values in Jesus' teachings;
- Catholic Christian moral values that relate to the life of the adolescent;
- the basis of moral decision-making within a Catholic Christian context: conscience, sin, and reconciliation; (see CCC, #396-421, 386-388, 545, 589, 1480-1497, 1846-1850)
- four sources of moral maturing: mind, heart, family/other persons, and Catholic Christian tradition;
- skills for critically reflecting on self, youth culture, and media and society's values in light of Catholic Christian moral values.

**Personal Growth** (see CCC, #27-30, 33, 343, 355-360, 478, 1701-1705, 2158)

**Focus:** This faith theme helps younger adolescents develop a stronger and more realistic concept of self by exploring who they are and who they can become.

**Suggested Content:**

- the building of a strong and realistic concept of self with an emphasis on self-concept, growing autonomy, and self-determination;
- Jesus' vision of being fully human and its impact on the younger adolescent's growing identity as a Christian;
- the response of the Good News and tradition to adolescent struggles (isolation, loneliness, frustration, anger) and problems (suicide, substance abuse);
- the development of skills for handling peer pressure and values, and adolescent problems.

**Relationships** (see CCC #1878-1882, 2207-2213, 2792-2793)

**Focus:** This faith theme helps younger adolescents develop more mutual, trusting, and loyal relationships with peers, parents, and other adults by emphasizing skills that enhance and maintain relationships.

**Suggested Content:**

- the nature of relationships;

- Jesus' life of service and teaching on living a life of loving service;
- relationships in the Christian community;
- the development of responsible relationships with an emphasis on honesty, love, and respect; (see CCC, #1930-1934)
- the development of skills, such as active listening and self disclosure, for communicating with peers, parents, and other adults.

**Service** (see CCC #1932, 2443-2449, 2831)

Focus: This faith theme helps younger adolescents explore Jesus' call to live a life of loving service, discover that such a life is integral to discipleship, develop a foundation for a social justice consciousness, and participate in service that involves relationships and concrete action.

Suggested Content:

- Jesus' life of service and his teaching on living a life of loving services;
- service as an essential element of discipleship;
- the development of knowledge and skills needed to engage in service;
- service projects;
- reflection on involvement in service projects.

**Sexuality** (see CCC #2331-2337)

Focus: This faith theme helps younger adolescents learn about sexual development, better understand the dynamics of maturing as a sexual person within a Catholic Christian's value context, and discuss sexuality with their parents using a Catholic Christian value-based approach.

Suggested Content:

- sexual development with an emphasis on accurate information
- sexuality as integral to one's personal identity with an explanation of gender identity and roles; (see CCC #369)
- relationships and dating;
- Catholic Christian understanding of sexuality and sexual moral values.

## FAITH THEMES FOR OLDER ADOLESCENTS

**Faith and Identity** (see CCC #80-100, 142-175, 185-1050 Creed section especially 272-274, 463).

Focus: This faith theme helps older adolescents explore what being a Christian, a Catholic, and a person of faith means; appraise the faith of the community; develop their own personally-held faith and own it; and grow in response to the Gospel challenge to be a person of faith.

Suggested Content:

- the meaning and experience of revelation and of God's actions in our lives;
- faith as a gift, as a process of understanding the basic questions that all persons face as a dynamic and positive force that can shape the adolescent's life and personality and ongoing process of conversion;
- reflection on present faith growth and struggles;
- the development of skills for reflection;
- Jesus as the model of a completely faithful person; (see CCC #459, 520, 606-609, 616)
- Catholic Christian beliefs with an emphasis on integrating these beliefs into a personal identity;
- the beliefs and faith traditions of the major Christian churches - their uniqueness and what they share in common with the Catholic Christian church.

**The Gospels** (see CCC #50-67, 101-120, 124-133, 515)

Focus: This faith theme helps older adolescents appreciate the historical and literary development, structure, and major themes of the Four Gospels; grasp insights that come from scriptural scholarship; and utilize these insights to interpret the Gospels.

Suggested Content:

- the three stages of Gospel development;
- revelation and inspiration;
- a study of the writing styles of the Evangelists and the structure of the Gospels;
- a study of the unique presentations of Jesus and the Good News in the Gospels;
- an in-depth exploration of one particular Synoptic Gospel.

**Hebrew Scriptures** (see CCC #50-64, 101-123, 128-133, 2568-2597)

Focus: This faith theme helps older adolescents appreciate the historical and literary development, structure, and major themes of the Hebrew Scriptures; grasp the insights that come from scriptural scholarship; and utilize these insights in interpreting the Scriptures.

Suggested Content:

- the growth, composition, historical development, writing styles and methods, and structure of the Hebrew Scriptures;
- revelations, inspiration, and biblical interpretation;
- the reading and interpreting of the Hebrew Scriptures;
- exploration of the major themes and life-questions of the Hebrew Scriptures and their relevance to today.

**Jesus** (see CCC #422-682)

Focus: This faith theme helps older adolescents explore who Jesus Christ is, discover his meaning for their lives, and develop a personal, deeply relational experience of Him.

Suggested Content:

- the historical and social world of Jesus
- Jesus' relationship with his Father and his image of God; (see CCC #2599-2615)
- Jesus' life, mission, and the key themes of his message;
- Jesus' death, resurrection, and ongoing presence; (see CCC #349)
- the Spirit and the Church throughout history;
- new ways of thinking about Jesus today;
- ways to develop a richer, more mature relationship with Jesus. (see CCC #521)

**Justice and Peace** (see CCC #1878-1889, 1905-1917, 1928-1942, 2234-2246, 2303-2317, 2408-2449, 2819-2820, 2831-2833)

Focus: This faith theme helps older adolescents develop a global social consciousness and compassion grounded in the Christian vision and attentive to the needs of those who are hurting and who are oppressed.

Suggested Content:

- the Scriptural vision of life (justice, peace, equality, and stewardship); CCC #1700-1715;1807;1928;1934-1948, 2270-2278, 2318-2330
- Although not included in the Challenge of Adolescent Catechesis, we would also suggest the Church's teaching on respect for all life, i.e. abortion, euthanasia, capital punishment
- the call to conversion, to live the vision, values, and lifestyle of the reign of God; (see CCC #543-546)
- an analysis of the social problems and injustices in the world, such as hunger, poverty, war/peace, inequality, discrimination, and ecology; (see CCC #279, 293-295, 299-301, 339-344 on creation)
- the determination of a constructive, Christian response to these problems on the personal, interpersonal, and social/political levels of one's life;
- the development of practical skills such as peaceful conflict resolution and organization for action;
- the recognition of the injustices experienced by young people themselves.

**Love and Lifestyles** (see CCC #369-373, 897-933, 1536-1571, 1601-1658, 2331-2391, 2517-2527)

Focus: This faith theme helps older adolescents explore their maturing sexual identity; use skills for developing intimate, trusting, enduring relationships; and discover how their spirituality can be lived out through a variety of lifestyles.

Suggested Content:

- Christian view of sexuality and intimacy;
- how to build love relationships and develop intimacy;
- dating;
- development of a sexual identity;
- how single persons, priests, deacons, vowed religious, and married persons live as Christians;
- the choice of a lifestyle;
- the improvement of life decision-making skills;
- Christian marriage, love, and family life in today's world.

**Morality** (see CCC #1691-1696, 1698, 1700-2550, 2842-2845)

Focus: This faith theme helps older adolescents critique their personal and social values; develop and use an interiorized, principled moral value system; and understand the role of Christian conscience and moral decision-making in the development of this interiorized moral value system.

Suggested Content:

- the development of an adult conscience based on Catholic Christian moral principles with emphasis on taking responsibility for one's moral values, actions, and lifestyles;
- how to interiorize a personally chosen set of moral principles and values;
- the confrontation and resolution of moral dilemmas;
- the development of skills for critically reflecting on self, youth culture, and media and society's values in the light of Catholic Christian moral values.

**Paul and His Letters**

Focus: This faith theme helps older adolescents develop an understanding of the historical context, literary style, and major themes of Paul's letters; utilize the insights of scripture scholarship to interpret his writings; and discover Paul as apostle, preacher, theologian, and man of faith.

Suggested Content:

- the early church communities as the context and setting for Paul's letters'
- Paul's missionary journeys, sufferings, and trials;
- the major practical and pastoral problems to which Paul responded;
- the major theological themes of Paul's Letters as seen specially in his letters to the Galatians and Romans.

**Prayer and Worship** (see CCC #451, 1066-1690, 2558-2856)

Focus: This faith theme helps older adolescents develop a personally-held spirituality and a rich personal and communal prayer life.

Suggested Content:

- the nature of prayer;
- Jesus as a person of prayer; (see CCC #584, 2599-2615 especially)

- Jesus' teachings on prayer;
- an exploration of images and concepts of God; (see CCC #39-43, 205-221, 691-701 on the Spirit)
- the development of a personal prayer life by exploring the who, what, when, where, why and how of prayer and by experimenting with and experiencing a variety of prayer forms and styles;
- the Church's worship and sacramental life; (see CCC #981-983)
- an experience of the richness of the community's communal prayer.

[All of the above segment from *CAC*, pp. 12-15. Quotes from the CCC have been added.]

The recent document *Renewing the Vision* confirmed these faith themes and organized them according to the structure of the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Additional faith themes named for younger adolescents included a focus on the Holy Trinity, the Sacraments and Church Year, Life in the Spirit, the Dignity of the Human Person, Grace as Gift, Lifestyles and Vocation. Additional faith themes for older adolescents included the Trinity, Revelation, and the Sacraments. (NCCB 1997)

### **Desired Pastoral Approach**

This framework for adolescent catechesis effectively provides a "scope and sequence" for younger and older adolescents. Parishes and high schools, in partnership with families, need to provide education in and exposure to the topics outlined in the faith themes. Planning for such a comprehensive approach will necessitate collaboration between parish and school personnel and systematic planning. In parishes, coordinators of youth ministry, directors of religious education, and priests and pastoral associates need to collaborate in their planning and implementation of programming and outreach. There will also be a need to integrate remote and immediate preparation for the sacrament of Confirmation in the midst of regular adolescent catechesis programming. (*CAC*, pp. 17-18, 15) In schools, principals, campus ministry coordinators, religion department chairpersons, and community service coordinators collaborate in comprehensive planning. (*CAC*, pp. 18-19) Parishes and schools need to be knowledgeable regarding the programming each makes available to the same young people. Emphasis needs to be placed on deepening the young person's experience of, affiliation to, and exploring of their faith in contexts (parishes, schools, and families) that complement each other because they are in close communication.

Because frequently younger and older adolescents are approaching some degree of "school burnout," it should be remembered that although programs must provide systematic and

intentional catechesis - they do not need to appear that way to the adolescent. Effective adolescent catechesis professionals in parishes will exercise the skill of creative marketing in inviting young people into various experiences, programs, retreats, mini-courses, lock-ins, and activities that provide education on a particular faith theme. Providing such options for young people is part of our responsibility to provide adolescent catechesis. A practical point to remember is that it makes no sense to handle all the faith themes through a program that few or no young people come to and then to consider the parish's responsibility fulfilled. Similarly, effective adolescent catechesis professionals in schools will use creative methodologies and strive to keep in healthy balance the teaching of religion as an academic course and the call to invite young people to deeper faith affiliation by showing them what is attractive and compelling in the person of Jesus, the content of the Good News and Church doctrine. It would also make no sense for a school to handle the faith themes comprehensively in curriculum planning and then, in implementation, to alienate young people from faith due to ineffective methodology or a lack of pastoral sensitivity. Instead, let us take heart for the real challenge of adolescent catechesis by remembering that:

God's Word when proclaimed, celebrated, shared, and lived in the Christian community is dynamic and fruitful. What an opportunity exists when the energy and giftedness of young people can be engaged with the vibrancy and richness of God's Word! The possibilities for personal development and growth in faith are then enormous and can lead to a richer life for the entire Catholic Christian community and for the family. The enthusiasm and challenge offered by young people who become more involved in the life of the Church can energize parish, home, and society. (CAC, p. 3)

### **DESIRED FAITH RESPONSES**

Young people are on a journey toward the realization of a number of characteristics of Catholic Christian maturity. A systematic, planned, and intentional adolescent catechesis addresses these characteristics by blending knowledge and understanding with skills and attitudes and by emphasizing the believing, trusting, and doing dimensions of Christian faith. The following characteristics, which need to be adapted to the social and cultural settings of the ministry, provide a guide to direct the catechetical effort in the adolescent's years (CAC, p.8).

- The maturing adolescent is developing a clear personal identity and is learning how to accept one's self as lovable and loved by God and others.
- The maturing adolescent is developing a commitment to personal faith and taking responsibility for his or her own faith life and ongoing growth as a Catholic Christian, which involves the gradual realization and response to the plan, will, and purpose of God for the world.

- The maturing adolescent is developing a mature relationship with Jesus Christ whom the adolescent has come to know in a personal way in the Scriptures and in the life and teachings of the Catholic Christian community.
- The maturing adolescent is learning the skills of critical reflection that enables one to analyze life experience, society, culture, and Church in light of the Good News of Jesus Christ.
- The maturing adolescent is developing an appreciation for the importance of the Scriptures in the Christian life and learning the skills for reading and interpreting the Scriptures.
- The maturing adolescent is developing a personal pattern of personal and communal prayer and worship and understands and appreciates the sacramental life of the Church, especially the Eucharist.
- The maturing adolescent is developing an appreciation for and knowledge of the Catholic Christian tradition, its doctrinal expression, and its applicability to life in today's complex society.
- The maturing adolescent is actively engaged in the life, mission, and work of the Catholic Christian community and in particular his or her own family, the Church of the Home.
- The maturing adolescent is developing an interiorized, principled Catholic, Christian moral value system and is able to confront moral issues using principles of Catholic Christian moral decision making.
- The maturing adolescent is integrating sexuality into his or her personality in a holistic way within the context of the sexual values of the Catholic Christian community and in particular his or her own family.
- The maturing adolescent is beginning to appreciate deeper relationships and is learning the skills for developing and maintaining relationships.
- The maturing adolescent is developing a life of Christian service modeled on Jesus' life and is learning that life is enriched when one gives one's self for others.
- The maturing adolescent is realizing that Christian faith means a commitment to justice and peace at the personal, interpersonal, and social/political levels of one's life and is acquiring the tools to work for justice and peace.
- The maturing adolescent is discovering how one's spirituality can be lived out through a variety of adult lifestyles. (CAC, p.8)

## CONCLUSION

In preparing a curriculum for both younger and older adolescents, there is much to consider. From who it is that we are conveying the message to (adolescent development, ethnic culture, and youth culture) to the person who is the primary message (Jesus of Nazareth) to the characteristics of the catechist/religion teacher/youth minister to the appropriate themes of our faith which deserve particular emphasis during this time of a young person's life. The task is not an easy one, but it is one which deserves all our passion. Young people know when adults or when systems do things they aren't really committed to. We are committed to communicating the faith to young people. "For the love of Christ impels us" (2 Cor. 5:14). May we make that love the energy for our efforts to engage in the challenge.

The opportunity of engaging adolescents in the life of the Church challenges us. As youth experience and express their expanding freedom, they resist mediocre or halfhearted efforts. Effective catechesis with youth requires that adult members of our community grow continually in their faith and in their ability to share it with others.....We cannot expect more of youth than we do of adults. The ways we adults learn about, express, and live our faith is a vigorous support or a serious obstacle in effectively catechizing youth. (CAC, p.3)

## CHILDREN

### INTRODUCTION

*"...because you have revealed these things to mere children"*  
- **Matthew 11:25**

The following section will deal with guidelines for catechesis for children, from the early childhood years to the intermediate years. It is important to note that this section is to be considered within the context of the other sections of this document, to ensure a wholistic catechetical approach. "It is important also that the catechesis of children and young people, permanent catechesis and the catechesis of adults should not be separate watertight compartments...it is important that their perfect complementarity be fostered." (GDC #72, quoting John Paul II, "The religious dimension of education in the catholic school," 7 April 1988, Congregation for Catholic Education).

It is undoubtedly obvious that within this wholistic framework, a critical time for religious education and formation is the period of the childhood years. “This age group...possesses, in the light of faith and reason, the grace of the beginnings of life, from which ‘valuable possibilities exist, both for the building up of the Church and for the making of a more humane society.’ “ (GDC # 177, citing ChL # 47). “Infancy and childhood, each understood according to its own peculiarities are a time of primary socialization as well as of human and Christian education in the family, the school and the Church. These then must be understood as a decisive moment for subsequent stages of faith.” (GDC # 178). When the child comes to the school, the Church, institutions related to the parish, this moment of catechesis is “...aimed at inserting him or her organically into the life of the Church, a moment that includes an immediate preparation for the sacraments. This catechesis is didactic in character, but it is directed toward the giving of witness in the faith. It is initial catechesis but not a fragmentary one, since it will have to reveal, although in an elementary way, all the principal mysteries of faith and their effects on the child’s moral and religious life.” (CT #37)

Although the systematic catechesis offered in the school or parish religious education is critical, so too is the formation within the context of the family. The GDC refers to the *loci* of catechesis, in this case, the school or parish program **and** the family. “In a certain sense nothing replaces family catechesis, especially for its positive and receptive environment, for the example of adults, and for its first explicit experience and practice of the faith.” (GDC # 178). Keeping this principle in mind, all curriculum planning resulting from these guidelines should be family sensitive, and involve, as much as possible, the cooperation and participation of the family.

It is significant to say a few words about the nature of the child. Robert Coles, in his book, *The Moral Intelligence of Childhood*, (Random House, New York, 1997), states that the child, in elementary formation, also given favorable circumstances in the family and the community, “...becomes an intensely moral creature, quite interested in figuring out the reasons of this world: how and why things work, but also, how and why he or she should behave in various situations. ‘This is the age of conscience,’ Anna Freud once observed, and she went further: ‘This is the age that a child’s conscience is built – or isn’t; it is the time when a child’s character is built and consolidated, or isn’t.’ “ Coles goes on to say that “This is the time for growth of the moral imagination, fueled constantly by the willingness, the eagerness of children to put themselves in the shoes of others, to experience that way their life.” (p. 99). Sophia Cavaletti, in her book, *The Religious Potential of the Child*, (LTP, Chicago, 1992) states that “In the religious sphere, it is a fact that children know things no one has told them....Children penetrate effortlessly beyond the veil of signs and ‘see’ with utmost facility their transcendent meaning, as if there was no barrier between the visible and the Invisible.” (p.43). And, lastly, Robert Coles in his book, *The Spiritual Life of Children*, (Houghton-Mifflin, Boston, 1990), quotes a little girl: “You never know who you’ll be until you get to that age when you’re all grown. But God must know all the time.” (p. 310). For parents and catechists, the formation of children is indeed a precious and delicate task, for we want to bring out and build upon all that God has already given them.

This section, as the previous ones, will describe the developmental stages, outline the role of the family, the faith community, and the catechist; delineate the goals of catechesis and their objectives, in the light of the six tasks of catechesis as outlined in the GDC; and describe the desired faith response in terms of skills and attitudes acquired.

## **THE EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNER (age 3 to 5 years)**

### **INTRODUCTION**

A young child's world revolves around self as an important member of family. Each young child needs to know that he or she is important in the religious education program, too. While there are some characteristics true of all three to five-year-olds, each is an individual with unique needs. Only by relating to the individual child in a loving way can the catechist establish rapport and create an environment conducive to faith sharing.

### **DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS AND CHARACTERISTICS**

"Life's beginning stages are of critical importance to individual growth and development" (*NCD*, #177). Researchers are discovering that very young children are slowly developing a greater degree of initiative than in the past. To encourage this development, the early childhood catechist needs to be familiar with the personal and faith developmental characteristics of the three to five-year-old. (See Erik Ericson, *Childhood and Society*, Norton: New York, 1950 and Sofia Caveletti, *The Religious Potential of the Child*, Liturgy Training Publications: Chicago, 1992).

Physically, preschoolers are refining their motor skills. Their attention span is limited and thus they change activities frequently, often racing from one to another. Their physical coordination is improving and they enjoy playing with other children.

Psychologically, preschoolers perceive stories in single images, like a slide show. Their imaginations are very active and they appreciate fairy tales and fantasy, learning intuitively through stories. Playtime activities are self-centered and explorative. A friend is whomever one is playing with at the time. Children of this age need assistance in feeling able to cope with the unfamiliar or frightening in their world.

In their faith development, preschool children do not question what they are taught about God. Parents and family strongly influence the faith of the young child primarily through their own loving and trusting attitude toward God and others (See *NCD #177*). The *CCC* states in #2223: "Parents have the first responsibility by first creating a home where tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity, and disinterested service are the rule."

As young children experience the love of their parents and family, they respond in kind. The young child needs to be loved in order to discover the love of God. As Sophia Cavaletti states on pg. 44 of *The Religious Potential of the Child*: "The child's need to be loved depends not so much on a lack that requires filling, but on a richness that seeks something that corresponds to it." Thus is developed the "religious attitude" that results in a correspondence between God - -who is love- - and the child, who asks for love.

Children in early childhood are concrete learners. Symbolic language is taken in its literal sense and the adult has little control over what meaning a story will have for a young child. Scripture, therefore, must be carefully chosen and taught to avoid stories that are abstract or ambiguous. Group and family prayer are meaningful, and young children tend to pray for concrete things. They like to talk to God about themselves.

In their moral development, preschoolers are in the first stage of moral growth. Their actions are governed by rewards and punishments and they are influenced by the moods and actions of the primary adults in their lives. "Good" is whatever adults wish and "bad" is what brings punishment. Preschoolers need encouragement, love, and acceptance to help them develop morally. A simple moral response of loving service is elicited when very young children observe their families reaching out in service to others. For the young child, the "reward" is being included in the activity of the family and the parish community.

In early childhood there is no mention of sin, for the emphasis is on forming a relationship with God before one focuses on the fracturing of the relationship. Children are rarely rejected from the group no matter how trying they may be. Children must always feel secure in the group which is characterized by care and thoughtfulness for others, even while everyone is expected to be reasonably orderly.

## ROLE OF THE FAMILY

By nurturing the young child's intellectual, emotional, and physical growth, parents contribute to spiritual growth as well. The CCC states in #2226 that "Education in the faith by the parents should begin in the child's earliest years. This already happens when family members help one another to grow in faith by the witness of a Christian life in keeping with the Gospel."

The CCC repeats this concept in language particularly suited for parents of children in the earliest years: parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children. "They bear witness to this responsibility first by creating a home where tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity, and disinterested service are the rule. The home is well suited for education in the virtues..." (CCC, #2223).

Parents of the very young child are encouraged to stimulate awareness and a sense of awe for and joy in life. The NCD in #177 encourages parents and other in close contact with these children to "...speak naturally and simply about God and their faith, as they do about other matters they want the children to understand and appreciate."

Setting aside a specific time to be with the young child, sharing events of the day, touching, hugging, and listening are some ways parents contribute to the faith nurture of the child by being models of loving service and care. Involving preschoolers in opportunities to be of service to others in the home and elsewhere lays an appropriate foundation for a sensitivity to concerns relating to justice and peace. GDSCM, #78, recommends that service to the community be "appropriate to the age and abilities of the persons who are being catechized."

Parents pray simple prayers with young children and establish patterns of prayer which are comfortable for them as a family. This would include simple, perhaps spontaneous, morning and night prayers, and family prayer at meals. Again, the CCC connects family and Church in #2685: "The Christian family is the first place of education in prayer...the family is the 'domestic church' where God's children learn to pray 'as the Church' and to persevere in prayer. For young children in particular, daily family prayer is the first witness of the Church..."

Being exposed to the parish service projects in which their parents participate help children to form a positive attitude toward Christian service which is about as much as is desirable at this age level. Simple stories from our tradition about people who serve the Church community and of saints help children to identify with the community. The virtues of sharing and helping as community members are emphasized.

In #2225 of the CCC, parents are reminded that through "...the grace of the sacrament of marriage (they) receive the responsibility and privilege of evangelizing their children...They should associate them from their tenderest years with the life of the Church."

## THE ROLE OF THE FAITH COMMUNITY

At a child's Baptism, the parish community promises to assist parents in this faith nurture. The parish, as the heart of the liturgical life of Christian families, is a privileged place for

the catechesis of children and parents. In *Putting Children and Families First*, USCC, 1991, the United States Catholic bishops advise diocese, parishes, and pastoral staffs: "In our churches we need to help families in their essential roles, offering both support and challenge. This requires liturgy and pastoral care responsive to children and families, first-rate religious education, schools, and other vital ministries...We need to offer to people the resources of our spiritual and sacramental heritage in effective and creative ways: through education...family retreats,...youth programs,...and the timeless spiritual resources of prayer, liturgy and meditation." (Ch. IV, pg.6).

While "no institution can substitute for the committed love, daily sacrifice, and hard work of parents in caring for their children...every institution should support parents in their essential tasks." (*PCFF*, Introduction, pg. 1). There is indeed a vital and important partnership between parish and parents in the catechesis of all the parish children. Parents cannot do it alone: parishes cannot do it alone.

The parish community assists parents by providing adult formation sessions on parenting, family living, human sexuality, and basic teachings of the Catholic faith tradition. These offerings may be considered part of the remote preparation for the first celebration of the sacraments of Eucharist and Penance, as suggested by the sacrament preparation guidelines from the Archdiocese of Baltimore, Division of Religious Education, *Signs of God's Love*.

A sense of security and trust in the home are of vital importance as a basis upon which faith builds. Helping the young child to establish a positive self-image, a feeling of security in the family, and an ability to trust are the first steps in catechesis. This happens first of all in the family but is reinforced within the parish community of faith. When the young child experiences a sense of communal awareness both in the family and in the parish the child is being prepared informally for sacramental celebrations later in life.

A sense of belonging to the faith community is fostered by encouraging the preschoolers to participate as much as possible in the social and worship life of the parish. By occasionally displaying the work of the children in the parish buildings the community is given the opportunity to notice and affirm its youngest members.

Being exposed to the parish service projects in which their parents participate helps children to form a positive attitude toward Christian service which is about people who serve the Church community and of saints help children to identify with the community. The virtues of sharing and helping as community members are emphasized.

## **THE CATECHIST IN THE EARLY CHILDHOOD YEARS**

Catechists know that abstract presentation is not ordinarily understood by children in this developmental state because what is abstract will probably be misunderstood and relearning will have to take place. God is presented, therefore, in clear images such as a friend or a parent figure rather than a supreme being. Catechists need to share their faith on a feeling level rather

than solely on a thinking level since their expressive and visible demonstrations of faith are very important.

The children need concrete experiences, active involvement and constant encouragement. In addition, catechists need to "take into account the experience and background of those being catechized and suggest ways that the Christian message illumines their life." (*GDSCM*, #70).

The early childhood catechist is aware that the universal elements of air, fire, water, earth, and light are teaching tools for the early childhood curriculum. Because of this, the catechist is a Christian person whose outlook on life and the things of the universe is incarnational. The early childhood catechist needs to be a person of deep faith and one who brings to that faith the same sense of awe, wonder, and surprise that these little children have. The catechist needs to be spontaneous, flexible, and a very good listener.

The catechist must "...arouse a sense of wonder and praise for God's world and providence by presenting creation, not as an abstract principle or as an event standing by itself, but as the origin of all things and the beginning of the mystery of salvation in Jesus Christ." (*GDSCM*, #12). The catechist's sense of seeing God in all that is good helps foster an awareness of the sacred, upon which formal religious education will be built.

Sophia Cavaletti, in *The Religious Potential of the Child*, pg. 52, insists that "...the catechist's task is to create specific conditions so that the relationship [with God] may be established." She emphasizes the importance of listening, of allowing questions, and of being comfortable with silence. "The catechist who does not know when to stop, who does not know how to keep silent, is one who is not conscious of one's limits and, after all, is lacking in faith, because, on the practical level at least, one is not convinced that it is God and his creative word that are active in the religious event."

The catechist in early childhood programs fosters a sense of belonging so that the children learn the meaning of unity, which can come only by experiencing it. Normal patterns of growth, both physical and developmental, are recognized and nurtured. By attitudes and actions, the catechist shows respect for and acceptance of the children. The catechist is patient, loving, understanding, and forgiving. These traits form the basis of a Christian community that assists growth in faith.

### **GOAL OF CATECHESIS IN THE EARLY CHILDHOOD YEARS**

"Too much too soon" is a phrase which can be applied to some experiences of early childhood catechesis. Too much content-centered learning, too soon in the learners' developmental state of growth, has, in the past, curbed the enthusiasm, spontaneity and awe which should be the hallmark of the preschool child. In #72, *GDSCM* recommends that curriculum be designed to always "use language and images appropriate to the age level and developmental stages and special needs of those being catechized."

For the very young child, the lively sense of joy in creation and in self forms the basis of the curriculum because it is seen as a gift from God. Elements of the universe are viewed and examined through the perspectives of sight, sound, touch, smell, and taste. It is important to recognize that it is through these gifts that we appreciate the other gifts of creation.

The early childhood learner is becoming more aware of self in relationship to others. Responding to loving relationships and learning to be responsible for one's actions are evidence of spiritual readiness in themselves. Helping the child to be polite and courteous to others prepares the way for listening and dialogue when more formal lessons begin. One of the most significant experiences in preparing the young child for Christian maturity is the sense of community, which permeates the religious education class.

The *NCD* and the *CCC* recognize four dimensions necessary for effective catechesis. In #6, the *CCC* states clearly these elements of catechesis which pervade the entire catechetical curriculum, including early childhood: "...catechesis is built on a certain number of elements of the Church's pastoral mission which have a catechetical aspect, that prepare for catechesis, or spring from it. They are: the initial proclamation of the Gospel...; examination of the reasons for belief; experience of Christian living; celebration of the sacraments; integration into the ecclesial community; and apostolic and missionary witness."

In other words, the components of message, community, worship, and service form the basis for catechesis for people of all ages. (The *GDC* adds two more: moral formation and the missionary initiation) The *GDSCM* in #72, however, cautions that it is important for catechists to "use language and images appropriate to the age level and developmental stages and special needs of those being catechized."

The basic curriculum for early childhood programs, then, will reflect these cautions while including the elements of catechesis insisted upon by the *NCD*, the *CCC* and the *GDC*. The following concepts are among those presented to children in early childhood. Formal catechesis includes these concepts but is not limited to them.

## 1. Word or Message

### **Objectives: children will understand and experience that:**

- God made everything that is good.
- God wants to share all good things with us.
- God gives us many special gifts: life, friends, pets, families, the beautiful world around us.
- God is a loving father/parent.
- God loves us as we are.
- Jesus is our brother.  
(For further clarification of this section, see *CCC* references: #295, #299, and #733)
  
- Mary is Jesus' mother and is like our mother.  
(For further clarification, see *CCC* reference: #1655)

- The Bible is God's special book.  
(For further clarification, see CCC references: #81, #98, and #105)

## 2. **Worship and Prayer**

**Objectives: children will understand and experience that:**

- We go to Mass to spend time with God.
- When we pray we usually begin and end with the Sign of the Cross.
- At Mass we sing the Amen and the Alleluia, and some other songs.
- At home we thank God for our food before we eat.
- We tell God "good morning" and "good night" each day.  
(For further clarification of this section, see CCC references #2598, #2655, and #2665)
- We say we're sorry when we hurt someone.  
(For further clarification, see CCC references #1422 and #1950)

## 3. **Service and Christian Living**

**Objectives: children will understand and experience that:**

- All people are part of God's family.
- We treat everyone fairly.
- At school we work and play together.  
(For further clarification of this section, see CCC references: #1700, #1946, and #1947)
- We try to help people who need special care.
- I help my family when we take food or clothing to people who need them.  
(For further clarification of this section, see CCC references: #544, #2044)
- There are people in the church who are examples of special helpers.  
(For further clarification, see CCC references: #2030)

## 4. **Community**

**Objectives: children will understand and experience that:**

- We are part of a special family.
- We love our parents, sisters, brothers, and other family members of our family.
- Our family belongs to a bigger family, too.  
(For further clarification of this section, see CCC references: #738, #834, and #1655)
- Our parish family is special and loves me.
- We go to Mass to pray to God and to be with my parish family.
- The people who lead our parish (Father, Sister, Deacon, Pastoral Associates and Directors, catechists, teachers) care for us and teach us God's love.
- Our school is another part of our parish family.
- I learn about God at school or religious education class.

(For further clarification of this section, see CCC references: #833, #871, and #781)

**5. Moral Formation**

**Objectives: children will understand and experience that:**

- Jesus teaches us to be good
- To obey our parents and teachers

(For further clarification of this section see CCC references: #426, #517, #531-534, #564)

**6. Missionary Initiation**

**Objectives: children will understand and experience that:**

- Jesus teaches us how to love
- We are to tell others about Jesus
- We need to help people who are poor

(For further clarification of this section see CCC references: #520, #426, #458, #1716, #544, #2444)

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|--|
| <b>DESIRED FAITH RESPONSE IN THE EARLY CHILDHOOD YEARS</b> |
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It is important to remember that content is not primary in nurturing the faith life of the early childhood learner. What is critical is that the very young child's natural sense of God is fostered by the important people in the child's world: parents, siblings, catechists and teachers, and the parish community.

It is precisely because of a loving Creator that the beauty of the world reveals God's presence to us. It is this beauty that nourishes the faith life of the preschool child. The *GDSCM* states in #12 that it is important to "arouse a sense of wonder and praise for God's world and providence by presenting creation, not as an abstract principle or as an event standing by itself, but as the origin of all things and the beginning of the mystery of salvation in Jesus Christ."

In understanding this approach to early childhood catechesis, it is evident that the desired faith response of the young child will be centered around the natural awe and wonder that these very young children experience in their world. The development of skills is not the major consideration; they will be taught more completely as the young child grows and develops. The natural spirituality of the very young child results in attitudes toward God that do not require much nurturing. Rather, it might be said that we would want to preserve the natural receptivity to mystery and spirituality in the young child as that child grows and develops.

It is clear, then, that as a result of the catechetical experience, children in the earliest years can be expected to respond in faith by learning a few beginning catechetical skills and by finding ways to express their own unique understandings of God in somewhat "traditional" words and actions.

**Skills:**

**Objectives: the children will:**

- learn the Sign of the Cross.
- learn to talk to God in prayer.
- be encouraged to speak about God in their own way.
- learn to say and sing the liturgical "Amen" and "Alleluia."
- exhibit appropriate behavior in dealing with conflict.
- participate in family service projects.
- learn to share.
- learn about God's creation through music, art, gestures, and stories.
- learn to care about others
- learn to do what our parents and teachers ask us to do

**Attitudes:**

**Objectives: the children will:**

- know that God loves them as they are.
- understand that God's creation is a gift to all of us.
- recognize that their families reflect God's love for them.
- know that their parish family cares for them in a special way.
- begin to learn about forgiveness.
- express their thoughts about God, church, and loving people.
- begin to understand how they can contribute to the peacefulness of the group.
- understand that it is important to help others
- know that God will help us be good

## **THE PRIMARY CHILD (ages 6 to 8 years)**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The primary age child has a limited amount of lived experience to draw on. This young child is still quite dependent upon her or his family for identity and security. The primary child is beginning to relate to others, however, as he or she continues to develop mentally and physically at a rapid pace. This child now is able to describe reality but often cannot define it. These factors must be considered when we concern ourselves with the faith life of the primary child. The religious education program in the parish or school supports the lived experience of the primary child and of his or her family as it aids in welcoming the child as part of the Christian community.

We see a profound change in faith life of children between the ages of six and eight. For the primary learner, catechesis does indeed move them along towards the beginnings of maturity of faith (*NCD*, #33). During the primary years, the young child is introduced into a wider social circle that includes a catechesis containing an immediate preparation for the celebration of the sacraments. This catechesis is "initial" but not fragmentary: it gives meaning to the

sacraments as having a "living dimension, ...not merely doctrinal, and it communicates to the child the joy of being a witness to Christ in everyday life" (CT, #37).

The everyday life of the primary child is connected to the person of Jesus through the teachings of the faith tradition (CCC, #426-427, CT, #5-6). The faith community provides the environment for catechesis of these young children when Christians "bear witness to their faith..." as they "hand it on to their children" (CT, #24).

It is, then, the responsibility of the entire parish community to bring primary children to faith in Jesus, especially as they prepare for the sacrament of Eucharist (RCIA, #9, CT, #67). Catechists, also, have a vital and specific role in this effort. As people of faith, they express their faith authentically, accurately, and in ways suitable to the developmental level of the children (NCD, #213).

In catechetical programs designed for the primary learner, it is important that the religious message that emerges from family, catechist, and faith community be consistent in the life of the young child. These children learn about God's love by being loved; they learn about God's fairness by being treated fairly; they learn about God's mercy by being forgiven; they learn about God's call to justice by being treated with respect. Catechesis includes all of these elements.

## **DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS AND CHARACTERISTICS**

According to developmental research, primary age children have an attention span of around 20 minutes and tire easily. They learn by doing, not watching. Concepts need to be simple and presented one at a time. Primary age children can play simple sports and like to manipulate objects. They are very active, have temper outbursts, and would rather play than work. Their sexual development matches their physical growth, and they are becoming more aware of sexual differentiation.

Children in the primary grades learn best from their own world of family, school, and life experience. They are interested in the concrete or factual rather than the abstract. Primary age children have active imaginations and can often retell a story from beginning to end although they cannot yet articulate the meaning of the story. These children are beginning to learn social skills and to give and take responsibility. They are breaking out of monologue forms of communication and are moving into a dialogical and conversational mode.

In the area of faith development, primary age children think of God in human terms and God and Jesus are thought of interchangeably. They are unable yet to view bible stories in the

abstract, but these stories and images are significant in encouraging imaginative and analogous thinking.

To primary children, the understanding of God as a loving parent who keeps order is important. Though every child's experience of a parent may not be positive, she or he can grasp the meaning of a loving person by experiencing loving, caring catechists and other adults within the parish faith community.

Children of this age can participate in community celebrations at a feeling level and they know what it means to belong to a group. They imitate the faith practices of their families, teachers, and adults who are significant in their lives.

The catechetical program for these children needs to be designed to include them in liturgical celebrations that meet their needs even though they may not yet have experienced Eucharist. Their interest in rituals, prayer, images of Jesus, and stories from scripture can be taken into account when these liturgical celebrations take place.

Primary age children are developing morally from the pre-conventional stage into the conventional stage. While expectation of rewards and fear of punishment is still the motivation to "good" behavior, they are beginning to follow community expectations and they take their responsibilities seriously. They are easily disturbed by criticism from authorities.

Children of this age are developing sexually although it is not always easy to observe a great deal of development in this area. However, these children are beginning to be aware of sexual differentiation and need to be reassured of their specialness in being a boy or a girl. Their friends are often of the same sex, and appropriate social behavior is often related to peer interaction. For further understanding of the sexual development of children of this age, see pp. 61-66 of *Catechesis for Human Sexuality: Regulations and Guidelines*, Archdiocese of Baltimore, 1994. See also *Human Sexuality: A Catholic Perspective*, United States Catholic Bishops, USCC, 1991.

Descriptions of the child's developmental abilities are always applied to the "average" child. No one child will display all of the characteristics described as being in the average range. Many will be greatly advanced or significantly slower in their cognitive, physical, and moral development. The catechist must discover the individual needs of each child and must also develop a sensitivity for the cultural, social, and family background of each child.

## THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY

The family is the first place where faith is learned, lived, and interpreted. The religious behavior and attitudes of parents, whatever it may be, can be called accurate predictors of religious behavior and attitudes of children. As the CCC so rightly states in #2207 and #1656: "...believing families are of primary importance as centers of living radiant faith. It is in the bosom of the family that parents are by word and example...the first heralds of the faith with regard to their children...The family is the community in which, from childhood, one can learn moral

values, begin to honor God, and make good use of freedom. Family life is an initiation into life in society."

Because the Church continues to recognize the importance of families in the faith life of children, great emphasis is placed on the formation of families as the "Domestic Church" that echoes the Church of diocese and parish. To repeat the message from, *Putting Children and Families First*, quoted in the previous section, parishes are urged: "In our churches we need to help families in their essential roles, offering both support and challenge. This requires liturgy and pastoral care responsive to children and families, first-rate religious education, schools and other vital ministries...We need to offer to people the resources of our spiritual and sacramental heritage in effective and creative ways: through education,...family retreats,...youth programs,...and the timeless spiritual resources of prayer, liturgy, and meditation" (Ch. IV, pg. 6).

For the primary grade child, families are indeed vital models of faith. Parents speak easily about God in the everyday events of family life. Prayer is a natural outcome of the comfort level parents have reached in the "God-talk" that comes easily to them. These young children often copy and imitate what they see and hear, and the first step in faith growth is seeing and hearing people of faith -- their parents -- include God in daily conversation, in prayer, and in their moral choices. This is indeed family catechesis upon which formal catechesis can build with confidence.

### **THE ROLE OF THE FAITH COMMUNITY**

The parish faith community assists parents and assumes an important role in bringing children to faith (*RCIA*, #9). "The parish is the Eucharistic community and the heart of the liturgical life of Christian families: it is a privileged place for the catechesis of children and parents" (*CCC*, #2226). The pastor of each parish "is to take special care for the Catholic education of children and of young adults" (*CIC* #528).

It is the shared responsibility of the diocese, the pastor, the pastoral team, and of the parish faith community to provide catechetical instruction to the children by well-trained and prepared catechists (*CCC*, #906). As head of a diocese, the Bishop is the one whose principal role is to "bring about and maintain in your Churches a real passion for catechesis" which takes the form of effective organization, necessary personnel, and adequate financial resources (*CT* #63). Indeed, Pope John Paul II further urges the Bishops in *CT*, #63: "You can be sure that if catechesis is done well in your local Churches, everything else will be easier to do."

Primary age children learn by imitating the faith of significant adults. What they observe in the parish community will greatly affect their growth in faith. The primary age child learns much about Christian values from watching the values of adults. When adults in a parish faith community are hospitable, forgiving, prayerful, just, and caring, it is more likely that the children in the parish will become hospitable, forgiving, prayerful, just, and caring as well. (See *The Moral Intelligence of Children*, Robert Cole, Random House, 1997).

These children, because of their baptismal call, also have a right to systematic and intentional catechesis so as to "develop the maturity of a human person and at the same time come to know and live the mystery of salvation" (CIC #217). Formal catechetical programs in the parish assist in the journey to maturity of faith that primary age children are just beginning.

All members of the parish faith community, then, are urged to share their faith with the children of the community. Because primary age children are so enormously receptive to receiving the faith of adults by observing, imitating, and modeling, this is even more important. When these children participate in effective intentional and systematic catechetical programs it is possible to integrate the lived faith of the parish community with the long and historic faith tradition of the Church.

### **THE CATECHIST IN THE PRIMARY GRADES**

Catechists of primary age children are first of all people of faith who share their lived faith eagerly, clearly, and with authenticity. The elementary catechist should have a sense of call – vocation – to this ministry of word with children. He or she should have a sense of mission in the task of breaking open the good news for children. The catechist should be a person of holiness – one who brings “the favor of saints” to his or her ministry. (GDC, #6) Vatican City, 1993). They are prepared for this ministry theologically and pedagogically through Archdiocesan catechist formation programs that stress an understanding of the content of the faith tradition as it connects with life experience. (See *Faith Lived – Faith Shared: Guidelines for Catechist Formation*, Archdiocese of Baltimore, 1991). They are people who represent church -- the people of God -- to the children and as such become a bridge between the life experience of the child and the liturgical, sacramental, and social outreach life of the parish and school.

It is important that catechists help the primary child to discover God in daily experiences and then to connect these experiences with the faith tradition. The bible should be placed in a prominent place in the class space, and stories, which show God as loving and caring, should be stressed. When scripture is proclaimed, it should be from the bible or lectionary, not from a textbook, missalette, or handout.

Catechists of primary children are energetic, focused, and know how to articulate profound truths of faith in clear and simple terms that are understandable to the children. It is important for the catechist to know that these young children, while they are believers, do not yet have the language skills to clearly express that belief. Catechists will give the children every opportunity to express their faith non-verbally and symbolically through art, music, stories, and other creative activities.

Catechists of primary age children will provide a variety of prayer experiences that are suitable to their stage of development. The catechist will guide the prayer to focus on God's love, the goodness of families, and an appreciation of the children and their gifts.

### **GOALS OF CATECHESIS IN THE PRIMARY GRADES**

The primary learner is a child just beginning a life-long journey of faith. The primary years present opportunities for building on the natural curiosity of children that will result in a mature search for truth in their adult years.

The faith tradition that is taught in a systematic, intentional, and flexible way during the primary years focuses on some basic concepts: Jesus is God, the Spirit is Jesus' presence in our lives today, Jesus comes to us in the bread and wine of Eucharist, God loves us and forgives us, the bible tells us about God and Jesus, our church consists of people who care for one another, and so on. These basic concepts and others present the formal catechetical component in the primary grades. Informal catechesis continues through the process of participation in family, parish, and community life.

The goals of catechesis in the primary years center around the four tasks of catechesis as stated in the *NCD*, #213. These are:

- 1) to proclaim Christ's message
- 2) to participate in efforts to develop and maintain community
- 3) to lead people to worship
- 4) to motivate them to serve others

The GDC (#175) adds two more:

- 5) to live morally
- 6) to spread the missionary dimension

The primary years provide opportunities to begin to attempt to accomplish these tasks or goals through the formal catechesis that is offered these young children.

The following concepts are among to those presented to primary age children. The formal catechesis includes but is not limit to these concepts.

## 1. **Word or Message**

**Objectives: the children will understand and experience that:**

- God is the creator of all that is good.
- The Holy Spirit helps us to live in peace.  
(For further clarification of this section, see *CCC* references: #295, #299, #525, and #733)
- The Church consists of people who love and care for each other.
- Our church has good leaders: the Pope, the bishops and priests, Pastoral Directors and Associates, and ordinary people.
- The Bible is a special book that was written by people who loved God.
- The Bible helps us to know about God's love for us.
- The Bible tells us about God, Jesus, and people of faith.
- The Bible has two parts: the Old Testament (about God's people) and the New Testament (about Jesus).
- We read from the Bible at Mass

(For further clarification of this section, see CCC references: #81, #98, and #105).

- Death is the beginning of new life with God.
- After we die we will live with God forever.  
(For further clarification of this section, see CCC references: #1010, #1020).
- We honor Mary, the mother of Jesus, because she shows us how we can love Jesus too.  
(For further clarification see CCC #1655).
- The saints are special people who can teach us how to be good.  
(For further clarification see CCC #2030).

## 2. Worship and Prayer

**Objectives: the children will learn and experience:**

- The Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary, the Sign of the Cross, and other formal prayers.
- Spontaneous prayer.
- Quiet, reflective prayer.
- Mass, or Eucharistic Liturgy, is a time on Saturday or Sunday when we all come together to praise and thank God.  
(For further clarification of this section, see CCC references #2598, #2655, and #2665).
- Our church celebrates God's presence at special times in our lives.
- Sacraments are celebrations that help put us in touch with God.
- Some of the sacraments take place at special times when friends and family gather at church to welcome a new baby to the parish, celebrate a wedding, meet Jesus in the bread and wine, or say they're sorry for hurting God or each other.
- Baptism brings us into the family of God.
- Penance shows God's loving mercy and forgiveness.
- Eucharist is Jesus who truly comes to us in a unique way under the signs of bread and wine at Mass.
- Confirmation helps us share what we have learned about Jesus' love.  
(For further clarification of this section, see CCC references, # 1210 -#1666).
- Lent is a time when we prepare for Easter.
- At Easter we celebrate the new life of Jesus when he rose from the dead.
- Easter is a time of new life in the church when many people are baptized.
- Advent is a time when we prepare for the birth of Jesus.
- Christmas celebrates the birth of Jesus.
- On Holydays we honor the saints and celebrate special events in the lives of Jesus and Mary.  
(For further clarification of this section, see CCC references #1167, 1171).

## 3. Service or Christian Living

**Objectives: children will understand and experience that:**

- Jesus teaches us how to be loving people.
- God's commandments teach us to love one another and to love God.
- Whenever we help other people we show our love for Jesus.

- We treat other people the way Jesus treated other people.
- We try to do things that are right because we know it's what God wants of us.
- Our church leaders teach us what is right to do also.  
(For further clarification of this section, see CCC references #544, #2044).

#### 4. Community

**Objectives: the children will learn, understand, and experience that:**

- The Catholic Christian church is a community – a family of faith established by Jesus Christ himself.
- Catholics are God's people who live out Jesus' love in caring for each other.
- Our families show us that we are loved and cared for.  
(For further clarification of this section see CCC references #738, #834, and #1655).
- It is good to invite people to come to Mass with us.
- We pray for one another.
- We try to get to know people who are new in our neighborhood or school.
- The sacraments are celebrated at Mass, with people from our parish.
- We invite people to learn about our parish community.
- People who are different from us have much to teach us.

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- We care for all of God's people.
- Jesus wants the church to include all people.  
(For further clarification of this section, see CCC references #833, #871, and #781).

#### 5. Moral Formation

**Objectives: the children will learn, understand, and experience that:**

- God calls us to goodness and glory.
- Sometimes we sin – commit sins by choosing to do things that we know are wrong.
- God's grace, given to us through Jesus, will help us to be good again.
- We are responsible for making good choices.
- God forgives us when we say we are sorry
- 10 Commandments  
(CCC #2411, 1716, 1950, 2033)

#### 6. Missionary Dimension

**Objectives: the children will learn, understand, and experience that:**

- We need to respect and care for all of God's creation.
- God wants us to be fair and just.
- Jesus wants us to help the poor
- Jesus wants us to help out the Church when we grow up  
(CCC #898-900, 2415-2418, 544, 244, 1807)

## THE DESIRED FAITH RESPONSE IN THE PRIMARY YEARS

We believe that faith deepens and matures as a result of many experiences in the lives of people. Formal, systematic, and intentional catechesis is merely one of the ways in which the faith life is nourished. However, it is reasonable to expect that out of the catechetical experience and the life experience within a loving community of faith some changes in attitude and behavior can evolve.

Primary age children are beginning to develop skills that are not necessarily “religious” or catechetical but which nonetheless can be applied to their growing awareness of God in their lives. These children are beginning to read, create, reason, and interact socially. The catechist will encourage the children to use these skills in activities that are connected with the faith life of the child. In other words, the child can respond in faith to the catechetical experience as it matches the life experience.

Catechesis, however, must always be sensitive to the child who does not conform to the group norm in the development of skills. Some children do not read by age eight. Some children cannot reason well yet. Some children have yet developed socially as far as others. On the other hand, some children are reading or reasoning far beyond their grade level, some are artistically gifted, some exhibit well developed

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leadership qualities. The catechist needs to be aware of each child’s unique gifts, talents, and personality and will be the one who personifies God’s love to all of the children.

A faith response is one that emerges from a combination of formal catechesis, life experience, and the grace of the Spirit. When they come together, attitudes and behavior change. God’s presence is very real in the lives of primary age children, and they are capable of a faith response that cannot always be measured but often can be observed. (See Sofia Cavaletti, *The Religious Potential of the Child*, Liturgy Training Publications: Chicago, 1992. Robert Coles, *The Spiritual Life of Children*, Houghton Mifflin: Boston, 1990. Jonathan Kozol, *Amazing Grace: The Lives of Children and the Conscience of a Nation*, Crown Publishers: New York, 1995).

It is clear, then, that as a result of the catechetical experience, primary children can be expected to respond in faith by learning new catechetical skills and by developing new understandings and attitudes. As with the content of formal catechesis, they include but are not limited to the following skills and attitudes that describe some ways in which this can happen.

### **Skills:**

**Objectives: the children will:**

- know and be able to recite formal prayers (Lord's Prayer, Hail Mary, Sign of the Cross, Creed).
- know how to pray both spontaneously and reflectively.
- learn how to forgive others
- know and be able to say some of the liturgical prayers and responses.
- be able to sing appropriate sung liturgical responses.
- behave appropriately at liturgical celebrations.
- learn and practice traditional Catholic behavior in church: blessing themselves with holy water, genuflection, kneeling, and the sign of the cross.
- begin to read from the Bible or children's lectionary.
- listen attentively when scripture is being proclaimed.
- understand the vocabulary used in formal catechetical sessions.
- be able to define some religious beliefs in their own words.
- present their ideas in writing.
- join enthusiastically in service projects.
- use appropriate forms of address for clergy and religious.

### **Attitudes:**

#### **Objectives: the children will:**

- come to know, speak of, and pray spontaneously to Jesus as friend, brother, and God.
- articulate their appreciation for the goodness and beauty of creation and be able to thank God for all that God gives to us.
- express in spontaneous spoken or written prayer their thanks, petitions, praise, and contrition.
- express in language, art, gestures, or music an understanding of God's presence in their lives.
- exhibit at an age-appropriate level forgiveness, hospitality, cooperation, and kindness to others.
- help and assist those who have special needs.
- contribute to the peaceful atmosphere in the group.
- recognize the importance of treating others fairly and with respect.
- begin to understand the difference between right or wrong behavior and attitudes.
- begin to understand their responsibility in choose to do right or wrong.
- appreciate the good people in our lives who show us God's love.

## **THE INTERMEDIATE GRADE LEARNER (ages 9 to 11 years)**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The intermediate grade child has been described as vibrantly alive, always in motion and full of enthusiasm. This child is in a "middle" stage of development, between childhood and early adolescence. It is sometimes difficult to determine where the child stops and where the early adolescent begins as these children reach the latter stages of the intermediate grades. This section of the curriculum guidelines focuses on the dynamic and energetic person who is "busy growing up" and who thrives on challenges -- the intermediate age child.

### **DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS AND CHARACTERISTICS**

The human development of the nine-to-eleven-year-old is probably described by the term used to identify his or her level of schooling -- intermediate, or "older elementary" school. Children at this age are at a plateau stage of development, both physically and psychologically, though they do show increased intellectual ability and developing moral growth.

Physically, students at this age have gained a certain stability. They have greater control of large motor activities, and an increased mastery of fine motor skills. They enjoy group activity

and interaction and are capable of more complex skills than a younger child because of their increased bodily coordination. Just as their physical growth has reached a plateau of sorts, so has their sexual development, though the latter part of this stage will be characterized by new growth and development in these areas. For further understanding of the sexual development of children of this age, see pp. 61-66 of *Catechesis for Human Sexuality: Regulations and Guidelines*, Archdiocese of Baltimore, 1994. See also *Human Sexuality: A Catholic Perspective*, United States Catholic Bishops, USCC, 1991.

The psychological development of intermediate grade children parallels their physical development. They are inclined to join consistent groups, to choose leaders and to form interests from within these groups. Boys and girls are likely to separate from each other at this level and can become highly competitive. There is less evidence of the need for that security which arises from a parent relationship than for that security which develops from belonging to a distinct group.

Students in the intermediate grades evidence increased intellectual skills of memory and reasoning and are anxious to investigate, observe, and draw conclusions. Their attention span and verbal ability improve as does their sense of history, though their notion of time is still somewhat restricted to the present and the immediate future. Students begin to draw conclusions and judgments based on their observations. They enjoy knowing the details of a problem and completing the research needed to solve these problems. Adventure, fantasy, risk, success, and humor form the elements of a successful story for the nine to eleven year old.

Morally, intermediate grade children begin to show growth in conscience development, grasping deeper insights into moral behavior. The motivation or intention behind an action takes on increasing significance. Children at this age, however, grow to be legalistic, developing a high regard for the law itself rather than an appreciation for the spirit of the law. Though the peer group is seen as the community of importance within which relationships are developed, the students also begin to appreciate persons of other faiths and cultures. The desire to identify with and to be of service to their own community of faith begins to take root at this time.

### ROLE OF THE FAMILY

Two major concepts have become increasingly clarified in catechetical developments over the past years. The first is that "parents are the first and foremost catechists of their children. They catechize informally but powerfully by example and instruction" (*NCD*, #212). The second concept is that "...the parish is the basic structure within which most Catholics express and experience faith" (*NCD*, #224). These two sources, parents and parish, have appropriate roles and responsibilities in various ways, but each has a responsibility for addressing the six tasks of catechetical ministry: message, community, worship and prayer, and service (*NCD*, #213) and moral formation and missionary initiation (*GDC* #175)

The *CCC* in #226 also insists on the mutuality of parents and parish in catechesis of children. "Education in the faith by the parents should begin in the child's earliest years. This already happens when family members help one another to grow in faith by the witness of a Christian life in keeping with the Gospel. Family catechesis precedes, accompanies, and

enriches other forms of instruction in the faith...The parish is the Eucharistic community and the heart of the liturgical life of Christian families; it is a privileged place for the catechesis of children and parents."

Parents of intermediate grade children proclaim the message of Jesus Christ when they communicate the values and attitudes that are a response to profound faith. In *CT #86*, Pope John Paul calls catechesis which takes place in the home "...incisive when, in the course of family events...care is taken to explain in the home the Christian or religious content of these events."

In the parish community, programs which support the parents' faith and role are offered. Parishes provide opportunities for parent enrichment such as retreats, scripture study options, and parenting skills workshops. Parishes support parents by providing systematic and intentional programs of religious education. Parishes communicate to the parents ways in which the systematic presentation can be reinforced at home through family discussion and activities.

Parishes also offer formal and intentional programs of religious education that can be used by parents to catechize their children themselves, at home. These home-study options are supported by the parish. Resources are offered, and professional guidance is provided to the parents by the parish staff. Often the "home-study" programs are used in families where distance from the parish is a considerable factor or in families where time or other personal family constraints prevent them from attending the regular parish programs.

Parents and children who are participating in home-study programs are expected to attend occasional in-service and evaluation sessions with the parish staff. Children are always invited to attend social and spiritual events with their peer group at the parish. Preparation for the sacraments is done at the parish in the usual way, and children in home-study programs are expected to participate in these preparations along with the other children.

The element of community is first experienced by children within a family system, which is safe, loving, and secure. This becomes a challenge for families burdened by contemporary societal influences, and yet parents are sustained by hope. In #16 of his *Letter to Families for the International Year of the Family*, 1994, Pope John Paul II encourages parents: "Raising children can be considered a genuine apostolate. It is a loving means of communication which not only creates a profound relationship between the educator and the one being educated, but also makes them both sharers in truth and love, that final goal to which everyone is called by God." Family structures differ widely and may include grandparents, single parents, or blended families, yet each family unit can strive to become a setting for the building of a loving community.

Parents assist their intermediate grade children in broadening their understanding of community to include an ever-increasing movement from the family circle to the larger circle of parish and neighborhood. For these children, this means that, though their parents continue to exercise a critical role, the community's role becomes more and more important. These children will reach beyond their family into organized sports, various groups such as scouts, camp, summer trips, vacations with friends and families other than their own. At this age,

children begin to experience greater physical distances and periods of time away from their family. Children who, a few years before, were attended by immediate family members are now more frequently in the company of other members of the community.

### **THE ROLE OF THE FAITH COMMUNITY**

The Parish faith community assists parents and assumes an important role in bringing children to faith (*RCIA*, #9). Carrying out the mandate of responsibility, the parish faith community first of all affirms and appreciates the contributions of intermediate grade children in specific ways. The parish can be especially effective in providing formation of community with intermediate grade children by inviting and welcoming them to participate in parish activities such as liturgies, social events, and service projects. These older children will accept the challenge of participatory involvement rather than the relatively passive presence they experienced as younger children.

Parents and parish nurture the prayer life of intermediate grade children by teaching them to pray, by praying with them both at home and at special liturgies, and by joining with them in regular celebrations of Sunday liturgy and the sacraments.

Once the sacraments of Eucharist and Penance have been celebrated for the first time, parents establish a regular pattern for continued celebration, supporting and deepening ongoing catechesis.

Service opportunities are suggested to intermediate grade children within the regular parish programs. It is vital to include them in actual service projects as well as in the planning for such projects. Parents assist their children as they widen the understanding of justice and deepen their awareness of the needs of the neighborhood and of those who live in distant lands. Personal witness is important: children of the intermediate grades respond well to example and modeling of service.

The response of the parish to families experiencing strain is another way in which intermediate grade children can benefit. In the complicated and changing society in which these children are living, the parish community can provide some critical resources. If the support of the immediate family or the extended family becomes inaccessible because of marital separations, physical distance, poverty, or other difficulties, the parish community of neighbors, families of schoolmates and friends, and others can provide essential support to the child's faith formation. While normally the home "remains the principal setting in which children experience a relationship with God...the support of the larger community becomes highly important to education in the faith..."(*NCD*, #178).

### **THE CATECHIST OF THE INTERMEDIATE GRADE CHILD**

The *NCD*, in #205, describes the qualities that catechists should strive to develop in their ministry. "It is these human and Christian qualities of catechists, more than their methods and tools, upon which the success of catechesis depends." The document *Faith Lived -- Faith Shared*, from the Archdiocese of Baltimore Division of Religious Education, 1991, lists "certain

minimal personal qualities and capabilities which an individual will have before being considered or asked to be a catechist." These two resources are excellent guides for considering who should serve as a catechist.

One of the qualities mentioned in *Faith Lived -- Faith Shared*, pg. 3, is that catechists should be "comfortable with and able to communicate effectively with the age group they will be catechizing." In considering the characteristics of the intermediate grade child, there are several traits and skills that catechists of students this age may wish to develop. The catechist of the intermediate child will encounter their questioning and more probing analysis of the points of faith. The catechist should not be intimidated by this but respond to the challenge: help the students to see a deeper meaning and relevance to what is being taught. The older the child is the more challenging the catechesis is. The catechist needs to be a person of confidence, relying on the Holy Spirit.

As in earlier years, intermediate grade children learn most effectively when engaged in the learning process. Group projects can be enjoyable and the rites for liturgical celebrations successfully taught if catechists are able to involve all the students in the learning process.

Catechists should encourage students to analyze facts and to explore the lived faith of believers, past and present, whose lives they can emulate. Meaningful memorization, particularly of certain essential doctrinal statements, is appropriate at this time. On the topic of memorization, the *GDSCM* advises in #75: "Maintain a judicious balance between personal expression and memorization, emphasizing that it is important both for the community and themselves that individuals commit to memory selected biblical passages, essential prayers, liturgical responses, key doctrinal ideas, and lists of moral responsibilities." When they understand the meaning of the memorized work, children in the middle grades have the ability to both memorize and to express their understandings of what they have learned by rote.

The sense of social awareness that nine-to-eleven-year-olds are beginning to develop can be fostered by helping them see the unique contribution the Christian makes in the world. Catechists should use daily situations and discussions to help students develop skills in moral decision making. They must challenge the students to correlate what they say they believe with their actions. In #53, the *GDSCM* recommends that catechists "cultivate the moral life of Christians by inculcating virtue and nurture a sense of responsibility that goes beyond external observance of laws and precepts."

Prayer experiences and reconciliation celebrations should include this element of social awareness, moving away from a formal legalistic following of the rules and moving toward a faithful response to a call from God. The catechist should "promote the continual formation of right Catholic conscience based on Christ's role in one's life; his ideals, precepts, and examples found in Scripture; and the magisterial teaching of the Church" (*GDSCM*, #53).

The catechist presents Jesus as a model and friend. Biblical personalities, saints and people in our own day who are living as Jesus did also serve as role models for the intermediate grade student.

Following the structure of the CCC, doctrines of the creed, commandments, and sacraments can be more fully explored at this time. Catechists, however, must emphasize the meaning of the doctrines beyond law and ritual. They must represent the effectiveness of God at work in the world today.

While students in this age group are definitely moving toward greater autonomy, they still look to adults for guidance and direction. Catechists, therefore, can be very instrumental in guiding children to a greater understanding of their faith, in leading them to meaningful prayer and worship, and in calling forth a generous response in service.

## GOALS OF CATECHESIS IN THE INTERMEDIATE GRADES

Intermediate grade children are Christians in formation. The faith-life that they received in Baptism must be understood as a developing gift. Involving the whole child in this development means acknowledging the importance and uniqueness of the human intelligence, emotions, and behavior. The children should be taught through a "...variety of strategies, activities, and auxiliary resources that can enrich instruction, deepen understanding, and facilitate the integration of doctrine and life" (*GDSCM*, #83). Experience is vital to the learning process. The catechist must see to it that the students experience a community of faith as a vital and loving environment in which the message of Jesus Christ is explored and celebrated.

Scripture must hold a primary place in the catechesis of intermediate grade students. Parents and teachers should help the child to listen to God's Word in scripture and to "...integrate biblical themes and scriptural reference in the presentation of doctrine and moral teaching and encourage a hands-on familiarity with the Bible" (*GDSCM*, #73). Prayer should accompany the frequent reading of sacred scripture, as the CCC advises in #2653; "...so that a dialogue takes place between God..." and the child.

## THE GOALS OF CATECHESIS

In the catechesis of intermediate grade children, the six tasks mentioned earlier are presented in specific and age-appropriate ways. It is around the six tasks of message, community, worship and prayer, service, moral formation, and the missionary initiation that the objectives for the systematic catechetical program are focused.

### **1. Word or Message**

**Objectives: the children will understand and experience that:**

- God is revealed in Sacred Scripture.
- The Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) express the faith of the Israelite people.
- The Christian Scriptures (New Testament) express the faith of Christians, the followers of Jesus.
- The Bible is the Word of God written by people of faith.
- The prophets brought God's message of repentance to God's people.
- God made a covenant with God's people Israel.
- God's covenant is also with us through Jesus.

- The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus form the basis of our faith.
- The parables and teachings of Jesus tell us how to live as Christians.  
(For further clarification of this section, see CCC references: #105-108, #124-126, #288, and #709)
- God is active in our world.
- Our Church celebrates Seven Sacraments which show God's action in our lives. In the sacrament of:

**BAPTISM:** "Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons (and daughters) of God; we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission: 'Baptism is the sacrament of regeneration through water in the word.'" (CCC #1213).

**CONFIRMATION:** "Baptism, the Eucharist, and the sacrament of Confirmation together constitute the 'sacraments of Christian initiation' whose unity must be safeguarded... For by the sacrament of Confirmation, [the baptized] are more perfectly bound to the Church and are enriched with a special strength of the Holy Spirit..." (CCC #1285, cf. *Roman Ritual*, Rite of Confirmation (OC),

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Introduction 1.) "In the Latin rite, 'the sacrament of Confirmation is conferred through the anointing with chrism on the forehead, which is done by the laying on of the hand, and through the words: [Be Sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit]'" (CCC #1300, Paul VI, apostolic constitution, *Divinae consortium naturae*, 663).

**EUCCHARIST:** "The holy Eucharist completes Christian initiation. (CCC #1322) "At the heart of the Eucharistic celebration are the bread and wine, that, by the words of Christ and the invocation of the Holy Spirit, become Christ's Body and Blood." (CCC #1333).

**PENANCE:** It (the Sacrament of Penance) comprises two equally essential elements: on the one hand, the acts of the man (and woman) who undergoes conversion through the action of the Holy Spirit: namely, contrition, confession, and satisfaction; on the other, God's action through the intervention of the Church. The Church, who through the bishop and his priests forgives sins in the name of Jesus Christ and determines the manner of satisfaction, also prays for the sinner and does penance with him. Thus the sinner is healed and re-established in ecclesial communion. (CCC #1448).

**MARRIAGE:** The consent by which the spouses mutually give and receive one another is sealed by God himself. (Cf. *Mk* 10:9). The covenant between the spouses is integrated into God's covenant with man (and woman): 'Authentic married love is caught up into divine love.' (GS 48:2)" (CCC #1639)

**HOLY ORDERS:** Holy Orders is the sacrament through which the mission entrusted by Christ to his apostles continues to be exercised in the Church until the end of time: [thus it is the sacrament of apostolic ministry. It includes bishop, priest and deacons]. (CCC #1536). The *essential rite* of the Sacrament of Holy Orders for all three degrees consists in the bishop's imposition of hands on the head of the ordinand and in the bishop's specific consecratory prayer asking for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and his gifts proper to the ministry to which the candidate is being ordained." (Cf. Pius XII, apostolic constitution, *Sacramentum Ordinis*: DS 3858). (CCC #1573).

**ANOINTING OF THE SICK:** "The sacrament of Anointing of the Sick is given to those who are seriously ill by anointing them on the forehead and hands with duly blessed oil." (Paul VI, apostolic constitution, *Sacram unktionem infirmorum*, November 30, 1972; Cf. SC 73; Cf. CIC, can. 847:1;0.) (CCC #1513). "This assistance from the Lord by the power of his spirit is meant to lead the sick person to healing of the soul, but also of the body, if such is God's will." (Cf. Council of Florence (1439): DS 1325). Furthermore, 'if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.'" (*Jas* 5:15; cf. Council of Trent (1551): DS 1717). (CCC #1520).

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- The Ten Commandments
- The Beatitudes  
(For further clarification of this section, see CCC references: #1716,#2052-  
#2550)

## 2. Worship and Prayer

**Objectives: the children will understand and experience:**

- The liturgical seasons and their meaning: Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, and Ordinary Time.
- The Easter Triduum as the central celebration of the Church.  
(For further clarification of this section, see CCC references: #1168, #1171)
- Ways to plan prayer experiences, liturgies, and sacramental celebrations.
- Participation in the Liturgy of the Word: how to proclaim scripture, how to design and read prayers of petition, how to listen and respond.
- The prayers, rituals, gestures, and responses in celebrating entire Eucharistic Liturgy.
- The Liturgy of the Hours.
- The Nicene and Apostles' Creeds.
- The meaning and practice of Rosary devotions; Marian Devotions- Sacred Heart, Immaculate Heart
- Guardian Angels
- The Holydays of the Church.

- Varieties of prayer in addition to formal ones: personal, group, meditative, spontaneous, reflective, verbal, silent.  
(For further clarification of this section, see CCC references #2655,#2665)
- The seven sacraments and their place in our daily lives.
- The meaning of sign and symbol in celebrating the sacraments as symbolic actions of the total church.
- A deeper understanding of the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist.  
(For further clarification of this section, see CCC references: #1210-#1666)

### 3. **Service and Christian Living**

**Objectives: the children will understand and experience that:**

- The message of the prophets was to keep God's covenant.
- Helping and serving others is a response to God's love for us.
- We are called to service by our Baptismal commitment.
- The Catholic Church's teaching on justice, mercy, peace, and social issues comes from the message of Jesus in the gospels.
- We help and care for those less fortunate than we are: the disabled, the poor, the homeless, the hungry.
- We treat all people fairly regardless of their race, color, gender, or income.  
(For further clarification of this section, see CCC references: #1928 and #1933)

### 4. **Community**

**Objectives: the children will learn and experience that:**

- We are members of the Catholic Church. Because we follow Jesus Christ, we are Christians. The Mystical Body of Christ- many members, one function. We all have different gifts, but are One Body.
- Our Church leaders help to guide us and teach us to be like Jesus.
- With the help of Pastoral Associates and Pastoral Life Directors, our Pastor leads our parish. Our Cardinal Archbishop leads our Archdiocese. The Pope leads the Catholic Church.
- Our Catholic Church community teaches us about God's love.  
(For further clarification of this section, see CCC references: #737, #738, #833, and #834)
- We are called to invite others to learn about our faith.
- We welcome and include others in our Church through the sacraments of initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist.
- The sacrament of Baptism brings us into the Catholic Church as members of God's family.
- Confirmation helps us grow in faith through the Holy Spirit.
- Eucharist is the presence of Jesus in our parish community through Word and under the appearances of Bread and Wine.
- Our parish community gathers each week to worship and thank God at Mass.

(For further clarification of this section, see CCC references: #833, #871, and #781)

## 5. **Moral Formation**

**Objectives: the children will understand and experience that:**

- The message of Jesus is to love God and one another.
- The Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes show us how to live good lives.
- Precepts of the Church – the importance of Sunday worship, reception of penance and Eucharist, holy days, stewardship and penitential practices
- People we love and respect, the laws of our country, the Ten Commandments, the message of Jesus, and our church all help to teach us what is right or what is wrong.
- When we sin we deliberately choose to do what we know is wrong.
- Sin is the breaking of a loving relationship with another person or with God.
- In the Sacrament of Penance we show sorrow for what we have done.
- In the Sacrament of Penance we experience God's forgiveness.
- The Sacrament of Penance calls us to conversion.

(For further clarification of this section, see CCC references: #1422, #1798, #1950, #1970, and #2033, #2041-2042)

- Sin and grace

## 6. **Missionary Initiation**

**Objectives: the children will understand and experience that:**

- God calls us to be disciples in our world
- About the missionary nature of the Church
- Jesus is the model of love and service
- Vocations
- Our job is to spread the good news
- Learn the good in other religions (CCC #434, 542, 787, 425, 1816, 618, 243, 725, 1724, 820-822, 1694, 825, 542-543, 914 -916, 944-945)

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### **THE DESIRED FAITH RESPONSE IN THE INTERMEDIATE GRADE CHILD**

These older children, as they grow and develop physically and intellectually, will also be growing spiritually. Their faith response will be more easily articulated as they become more verbal and expressive. Their "skills" in describing and living out their faith will be more highly developed. While they are more ready to use traditional religious terminology in describing their experience of God, it is important to recognize that their own life experience will contribute greatly to how they come to express what they are being taught in a formal and systematic religious education program. It is also important to know that a desired faith response can be observed but often is not measurable.

As with all children, there is a great diversity in the developmental level of children in the intermediate grades. The catechists must always be sensitive to those children who do not yet

have some of the skills and attitudes that others have achieved. Each child's unique gifts and abilities are appreciated and affirmed.

The faith response of the intermediate child will depend on many aspects of catechetical and spiritual formation over a period of time. These older children have had more time to hear about Jesus and God, to experience Church in their parishes and schools, to learn more about what we believe about God and our religious tradition that changes us and draws us to holiness. It is how we have come to know God through the holy and grace-filled people, places, and events of our lives that leads to an authentic faith response.

It would be reasonable to expect, however, that as a result of the catechetical experience the intermediate child will exhibit some aspects of the desired faith response in acquiring new skills and attitudes. These desired faith responses include but are not limited to the following skills and attitudes that describe some ways in which this can happen.

### **Skills:**

#### **Objectives: the children will:**

- know and explain the importance of the Bible in our Christian faith.
- understand and be able to describe the meaning of the faith of the Israelite people as presented in the Old Testament.
- be able to express in their own words Biblical concepts such as revelation, creation, covenant, the Exodus journey, and salvation.

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- know the role of the prophets in salvation history.
- describe the major teachings of Jesus as presented in the New Testament through parables, example, death, and resurrection.
- learn and be able to recite more complicated prayers such as the Profession of Faith and other liturgical responses such as those in the penitential rite, Glory to God and the "Holy, Holy".
- learn and use a wide variety of prayer options such as personal, group, spontaneous, meditative, written, and silent.
- understand and be prepared to use the Rosary and other Catholic devotional prayers.
- describe the importance of the Easter Triduum in our liturgical year.
- distinguish among other liturgical seasons and their connection with the seasons of the year.
- participate in all prayers, gestures, responses, and ritual actions in celebrating the Eucharistic Liturgy.
- demonstrate the ability to proclaim scripture, present prayers of petition, and participate actively in the Liturgy of the Word.
- with guidance, be able to plan and carry out prayer experiences, liturgies, and sacramental celebrations.
- learn and be able to state the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes.
- understand the meaning and significance of the Ten Commandments in developing a moral response.

- begin to recognize the significance of the Beatitudes and Jesus' law of love.
- know and appreciate Jesus as one sent by God to show God's love for us.
- develop the ability to form a good conscience in order that they will make good moral decisions and choices.
- understand and celebrate the sacrament of Penance with a sense of authentic repentance, conversion, and reconciliation – an understanding of sin and grace.
- know the Seven Sacraments and be able to express in their own words the importance of the Sacraments in their lives and in the life of the Church.
- learn and understand what signs and symbols are used in sacramental celebrations and why.
- identify the levels of leadership in the Catholic Church structure.
- demonstrate an understanding of their role as members of the parish community of faith.
- begin to learn and to understand the Church's teachings on social justice.
- recognize the connection between the Church teachings and the Gospel message of Jesus to bring peace and justice to the world.
- participate in parish projects to assist people in need.
- learn the meaning of discipleship and vocation
- learn the missionary nature of the Church
- learn the good in other religions
- understand Mary and the Saints.
- Understand the real presence in the Eucharist.

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**Attitudes:**

**Objectives: the children will:**

- find in scripture models of faith who will be life-long inspirations for them.
- grow in their understanding of God's covenant love.
- grow in their understanding of their part in the covenant relationship with God.
- appreciate, read, and pray the Bible.
- acknowledge the Bible as written and read by people of faith to help them know more about God.
- express in language, art, music, or gesture the meaning of God's presence in their everyday lives.
- discover how new ways of praying help them to respond more authentically to God's presence in their lives.
- internalize the meaning of the Ten Commandments as a guide for moral living.
- find ways in which they can live out Jesus' law of love in their own families, schools, and communities.
- respond to God's call to repentance and conversion by an increasing awareness of right and wrong.
- choose the "right" or moral responses in making moral decisions.
- understand God's forgiveness in the sacrament of Penance.
- participate more fully and actively in Eucharistic Liturgies.

- begin to recognize and appreciate the different signs and symbols of God's presence in Sacramental celebrations.
- understand and appreciate ways in which the Seven Sacraments make special events holy in the lives of Catholic Christians.
- participate in projects that contribute to peace and justice in their neighborhood, city, or world.
- carry out service projects that help and assist those in need.
- respond to invitations to participate and assist in parish events that are offered for all age groups.
- respect and honor those in parish ministry.
- appreciate the hierarchical structure of the Church as guided by the Holy Spirit.
- grow in appreciation of their Catholic roots and practices.
- exhibit curiosity and ask questions about their faith tradition.
- grow in appreciation of the good in other religions.
- understand that God has a plan for them in this world – now and in the future.
- begin to tell others about the good news and goodness of Jesus Christ

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